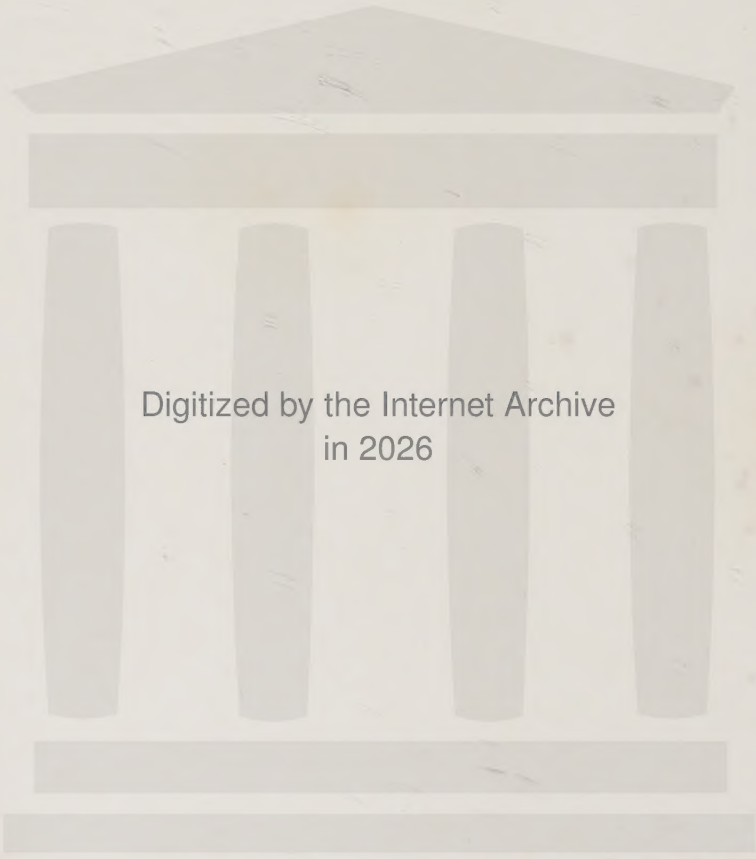
DECORATIVE Styles and Periods

HELEN CHURCHILL CANDEE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DECORATIVE STYLES AND PERIODS
IN THE HOME

VENETIAN BED

DECORATIVE STYLES AND PERIODS

IN THE HOME

BY

HELEN CHURCHILL CANDEE

With one hundred and seventy-seven illustrations

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DECORATIVE STYLES AND PERIODS IN THE HOME

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

WHETHER home-makers are dancing happily through their new portal to the music of wedding bells, or walking thitherward with the more repressed jubilation of middle life, the conviction in the mind is the same, that of all beautiful places in the world this home of theirs is to be the most beautiful.

The expression this beauty shall take is a matter of airy indefiniteness, and for direction depends upon the most haphazard of chances, mainly on the houses one has seen. If these have been in good taste, proper predilections are likely to have grown up in the mind; and if the contrary, a strong idea of what to avoid has sprung from the contemplation of drawing-rooms, not widely divergent in effect from the pattern parlor set up in show windows of department stores; or from homes where shabby furniture of thirty years ago quarrels with modern bright ash wood-work and Nile-green walls.

A ready advisor comes forward in the form of the artisan house-decorator whose name is legion, and whose audacious signs flaunt gayly in the avenues; he promises with light ease to crystallise vague and vaporous desires. Deceived by his airy assumption of intimacy with the sacred mysteries, many a trusting beginner has delivered into his hands the keys of the empty castle, and into its holy precincts the vandal has poured an army of desecrators (*he* calls them decorators) with ladders, scaffolds, and canvases, which so effectually screen the advancing work that it is only when all is over the misguided owner is disillusioned; then there is no choice but to pay the bill or double it for rectifying. The choice of decoration is like the choice of a career; all exists in a flattering imagination while the selection is being made; after that comes the disillusioning reality.

It is worth the while of the owner of a home to know more than the people of whom he is to buy the decorations and furnishings for the new or the remodelled home. It might seem that it is the province of the decorator and the furnisher to know better than the layman all the intricacies and occultism of their trade; but the man with things to sell thinks only of selling them as a rule, and from his view point the buyer should know what he wants. After all that is not an unwarrantable assumption.

And this process of learning what is desirable to put into the home to make it the ideal of taste and

comfort is one so absorbing and so piquant that it becomes a positive joy, as exhilarating as the chase, as absorbing as the search for gold. The eye learns to see those things to which it was blind before, and the mind dresses each discovery with an exquisite draping of the chiffons of romance and history.

Modernity with its conveniences, its adaptations to latter day domiciles and manners of life, puts up a plea for consideration. The reason for its rejection is to be found in the household wreckage piled up in dispiriting heaps on sidewalks of second-hand furniture stores, or before the homes of those who are in the unhappy process of moving from one home to another. As soon as its freshness has gone, we would have none of it.

When the forests of Michigan are brought to our shops in the form of freshly varnished furniture at prices attractively low, there seems to be a certain "go" about it, and the impulse comes to put some in the house. It is true there is virtue in much of the modern products; that thought has been the Scylla of buyers for seventy-five years, but the virtue is only that of suggestion. Some line is followed that explains the motif of another time, a distinctive and more perfect mode, and it is because of that resemblance that the new lines please. Better far to turn to the original from which the pleasing lines are borrowed.

Modern developments are distrusted with reason.

They are founded on the restlessness of taste, on the corrupting desire for novelty, — a desire which trade encourages as being vulgarly "good for business." Modern modes in furniture and decoration are like modern modes in dress; they need only to pass out of fashion for the eye to discover their inherent ugliness. We are slaves to fashion in many ways, and on fashion the so-called modern furniture and decorations depend for popularity. The fashion of the hour insidiously intoxicates the taste, whether it relates to a style of woman's adornment, a dinner, or the table on which the dinner is served. The awakening from this intoxication reveals the faults of the object favoured.

Since the period known as the Empire, what tricks have been served by the fashion of the time, the novelty of the hour! Leaving whatever of chasteness the severe lines showed, the style became corrupted by clumsy modelling, mere size masquerading as elegance.

Within the memory of many we have had various reflections of Gothic and Japanese and Eastlake, — all now consigned to waste places as being too ugly for the eye to rest on in the quiet hours of home, and too shamelessly inartistic to exhibit to the stranger within the gates.

It is because of this series of false modern gods, each one worshipped in turn, that novelties have fallen into disrepute except among the masses. That

a style is new causes the wary to regard it with suspicion, lest if he warm it by his hearth, it sting him at the last. All other innovations have failed, and why not this most recent one?

Two things are clear: that the proved styles of the past are best, and that the buyer must study these carefully to prevent error. Periods are not so distinctly separated as inches on a yard-stick or squares on a checkerboard; they shade one into the other more like the tints on a cloudless sunset sky. There are as many transitorial periods as there are periods at their highest development, and these must likewise be studied for a full comprehension, although they are not so satisfactorily copied. The best effects are produced where the leading motif of a period is adhered to consistently; but it is a part of the eye's education to know the evolutionary process. Only a thorough acquaintance secures absolute protection against the slipshod or mongrel styles which are to be shunned with relentless avoiding. Indeed the whole of this specific education (apart from the intellectual joy) is its equipment against false gods, its ability to recognise their falsity.

A room decorated and furnished after a recognised style is like a past century compressed into one apartment. And therein lies one of its chief charms, its subtlest perhaps. It is a true delight when in hours of ease the eye rests on designs full of meaning, on forms invented to please the caprice of a court

beauty, on lines indicating the conquest of one nation by another, on symbols which expressed human ideas before the age of letters. This chair is modelled from a design buried for centuries under the ashes of Vesuvius; this tapestry illustrates the monastery's attempt at Spanish-moresque design and colour; and on yonder table *écarté* was played in the palace of St. Cloud. Each piece of furniture has a history to tell, — a stirring tale of man's progress, a terrible one of his iconoclasm, or a dainty one of his softer moods. The history of the rooms' fittings is a part of the history of the world, and in a liberal education is found the answer to the riddle of the designs. Indeed, one can scarcely live among these evidences of the past without being impelled to study the events which incited their production. The history of the home and its fittings is the history of man from the time when walls first sheltered his family.

The modern hotel and the stirring manufacturer have created a fleeting fad, — a run on what they proudly call period decoration. With much taste and fidelity to models certain hotels have furnished and decorated rooms which have attracted the attention of the travelling public. The sharp eye of trade has been quick to follow the lead and to display in the furniture shop and the department store sets for drawing-room or bedroom in the styles of Louis Quinze or Louis Seize. Even the remote periods of Italian and Flemish and English Renaissance are

dragged forward and set before the purchaser as suitable for hall, library, or dining-room.

Entirely apart from the question of whether or not it is agreeable to run across these old models ignominiously placed next to toy velocipedes and dry groceries, is the matter of correctness of copy. Alas, not one of them will bear the jealous gaze of the true lover of the old styles in their purity. There is some law of nature which seems to compel the artisan to show the cloven hoof of innovation. His touch becomes desecration. Instead of affectionately, reverently following the lines invented by the inspired artists of long ago, his straying fingers invent unspeakable novelties with which to paint the lily.

Perfect copies of the exquisite forms of old furniture are not obtainable by the van-load. Special artists alone can reproduce them, and even these too often miss the subtle proportions of the old, on which depends half their charm. The ordinary department store copies have been turned out by thousands, and with a view of pleasing the popular taste of the moment. It is safe to say that popular taste is usually in error; it is rarely pure. These pieces are wrong in shape, wrong in color, in proportion. Inlay is introduced where no inlay ever was; simple lines are broken with carvings totally incongruous; stuffs for covering are inappropriate; and in a dozen ways the eye is confounded, the taste affronted. And one of the points of irritation is the airs of familiar-

ity with matters artistic that is assumed by those who gain their knowledge of the great decorative periods from examining and pricing these perverted manufactures.

Those there be who recognise no difference between gold and dross, but theirs is not a permanent condition. If their houses are filled with counterfeits this will in course of time be discovered, and discontent ensue. Far better it is to be informed before buying, to have the taste so cultivated that mistakes are not made, and to have an eye so trained that a rococo ornament on an Empire chair would look as strange as a lemon growing on a rose-tree.

In many parts of our country the eye of taste is open to but one division of the great list of decorative periods, and its furniture. By this is meant the successive English styles running from the Jacobean through the Anglo-Dutch, and through the styles which were best expressed in mahogany, down to the Anglo-Saxon adaptation of the Empire; a period of decoration essentially English, a period of time extending from 1600 to 1800.

There is more than reason in the selection, — there is sentiment as well. As most of us are from English stock, the taste which pleased England pleases us. We do not find it cold and uncompromising, rigid and self-righteous, as do warmer temperaments, but it represents to us restraint and purity.

Then again a strong race-feeling is at work, and

patriotism, for these styles belong to the earliest experiences of the early settlers, to the increasing luxury of the Colonists and to the independence of the States — to say nothing of ancestral association.

It is in the smaller towns and among the oldest families that the relics of these periods are mainly preserved, both in domestic architecture and in furniture.

For years the country has been scoured, old pieces spied out by the covetous and sold by the impecunious, until now but little remains to buy. The result is far from deplorable. Those with money and taste and strong sentimental appreciation have gathered up the charming waifs and have massed them in homes of noble size, reproducing with fidelity the old atmosphere, and investing it with living energy.

Collections these gatherings are called only by the curio-hunter; to the true home-lover they are more. A collection suggests a dry posing, a soulless exposing, catalogues and erudition. Rising far above these in value is a room of fine proportion, made dignified by fluted pilasters and dentil cornices, — all happily filled with colonial antiques which are revivified by intimate association with their owner's daily life.

But there is an end to the mahogany of our forefathers. Every one cannot have an entire house furnished with mahogany antiques after the manner of certain elegant homes in Albany, in Hartford, in

Providence, in Portsmouth, and on very many estates of the South. Copies, yes; but one is never satisfied with these after making the acquaintance of the poetic originals.

Besides this, the thin austerity of the English style does not produce that sumptuousness of effect that is a desideratum in these extravagant days. And as we are a travelling people, we now look elsewhere than in the farmhouse attic, the impoverished plantation, for survivals of old styles.

In our large cities, therefore, the present tendency is to leave the styles of England and to make interiors rich with those of Continental Europe.

Suppose one has been educated to the austerity of old mahogany set in rooms thinly decorated, with no attempt at ornamental woodwork, and one is at once thrust into a noble room dark with raftered ceiling, rich with glowing tapestries, luxurious with huge throne-like chairs, the whole place a harmony of colour, an invitation to every artistic nerve to respond with sheer delight.

Where the bewildered senses lead, the mind follows. What are all these lovely productions, from whence did they come, by whom were they made and at what era, — all these questions require to be answered. A new world of decorative lore is opened, and one falls with a sense of artistic well-being into the belief that the Italians and the French are not only the greatest masters of elegant com-

fort, but that our English styles are after all but a hard, bare echo of the productions of races artistically superior.

And this is the position of decorative taste at the present moment. It is ardently seeking the old styles of Continental Europe, and the result is matter for joy. Cultivation shines from every Renaissance cabinet, refined taste speaks from every Italian table, and exquisite luxury is offered by every French chair.

To the unaccustomed these wonderful strange productions create a delicious sense of confusion, a piquant sense of ignorance, and a surety that here at last is the *ne plus ultra* of artistic excellence.

Side by side with this is the determination to know more of these beauties, to be able to distinguish them as surely as a Chippendale chair is known from an Empire, and, moreover, to learn their history from the very beginning. And therein lies matter more fascinating than a fireside tale.

Just how to gain this knowledge, how to enter into its delights, depends on opportunity. Those who live in rich cities, those who travel, can find the royal road. Others find their way in books, and it is with the intention of aiding such that this book is written.

As the models for all modern furniture are found in Italy of the Renaissance, that brilliant period is studied with the greatest pleasure and profit. At every turn a discovery is made which in some way

relates to the household gods of centuries later, until at the last the conviction grows (not without patriotic protest) that all our vaunted excellence in design is but a dilution and a constricted copy of some inspired Italian work.

One must be abreast with the times; and as every ship brings from Europe magnificent trophies for the homes and museums of America, it is none too soon for us to learn how to read on the new-old faces their age and nationality and a bit of their romance.

CHAPTER II

I. GENERAL ANTIQUITY

IT is the happy business of the architect and decorative artist to study the ancient styles of the centuries before the Renaissance, and to find in them much fascinating material for thought. But we who are only home-makers of the moment can but glance at the work of the past in the most cursory way until the glad hour comes which may be devoted to pure cultivation. This being a day when the compressed tablet fills the want of a hurried people, it is well to take in this concentrated form the history of decoration before the fifteenth century, throwing into the compound a dash of Egyptian, Grecian, Roman, Romanesque, and Gothic.

If the combination sounds strong to unpleasantness, let judgment be suspended until the tablet is taken, for it is certainly beneficial and not at all unpalatable.

Especially in America does the idea prevail that the mere march of time insures intellectual progress. Those who have come to forty years, and from that height survey the land, see daily our cities enlarged,

our mechanics developed, our public-school children outstripping their parents, and a thousand other flattering marks of the onward march.

It is a bit of a blow to the self-complacent survey to find that when we wish to concentrate all this modern improvement into the dearest spot on earth, sweet home, that we stumble on records of a domestic perfection that matured centuries before the Christian era. I speak particularly of decorations; for domestic architecture being the exact expression of social needs, must vary with races and climates.

The story of the home, its furnishing and its decoration, is a fascinating tale, leading from happy introductions through all the intricacies of an absorbing plot, with every element of charm and strength. Chapter by chapter the story opens, and each one follows in artistic sequence.

But to understand the characters, to recognise the *dramatis personæ* as they reappear in other countries and in altered vestments, their acquaintance must be made in the first chapters. In other words, a study must be made of their important features, that each may be recognised wherever found.

A deep investigation of the designs symbolic and decorative, which were perfected thousands of years ago in China, India, Japan, Assyria, Egypt, is one for the specialised student only, and it is not within the scope of a handbook on general styles to treat them with exhaustive erudition; but as all we have

now proceeds from these beginnings, a certain familiarity with them is more than desirable. It is, in fact, a necessity to complete understanding of the things around us to know the alphabet of decoration.

To the collector of furniture or the maker of a home (synonymous they are), the delight is keen when he recognises in the precious furnishings about him the designs whose history and significance he has studied. The ball and claw foot of a chair suggests the European adaptation of the Chinese dragon and his pearl; the Italian mosaic speaks of its Oriental ancestry; the fine pilaster of the Venetian Renaissance tells its Greek inspiration; and many other familiar friends announce themselves thus charmingly to the initiated.

If nothing is new, then there is much agreeable matter in placing the old, and to do that involves a turning back to the earliest beginnings. Even art's latest note, l'Art Nouveau, has for the most part the feeling of old Japanese designs. The Adams period of English decoration had inspiration from France, which imported it from Pompeii, this in turn having been copied from the older Greek, which leads back still further to the Egyptian.

To know these styles and all others that have made their lasting impress involves a course of study so delightful that one wishes never to reach its end. But it is sufficient for the child of the hour whose life is divided by many interests to have a bowing

acquaintance, an ability to recognise, in passing, the great fundamental styles of the antique.

Going back to the beginning of things, Egypt rises reluctantly from desert tombs and buried cities; and from her are forced the secrets of a decorative art so rich and so close to Nature that they could not die, or, at least, in dying inspired those master artists, the Greeks.

Egyptian domiciles would be as much out of place in a town as a Venetian palace set on an arid hill; but the wonderful beauty of Egyptian details are worth a moment of study, for themselves and because they inspired other artists of other countries. It is but natural to ask of what value they are practically. The reply to that is, identification of classes of design, and pure delight.

Everything that goes to nature for inspiration is true and beautiful. The Egyptian artist decorator did this very thing. He lay dreaming in the sun on the Nile banks until the lines of the water, the colour of sand and sky had soaked into his soul, and his hands expressed the mind's delight. He reached out and plucked the flowers from the river, and laid bud and petal in charming repeating patterns. He bound together the long reeds to form a model for columns; and for capitals he grouped the feathery palms or took pattern from the opening lotus bud. He made that most perfect of all columns where the capital is not a detached block set atop a shaft, but springs

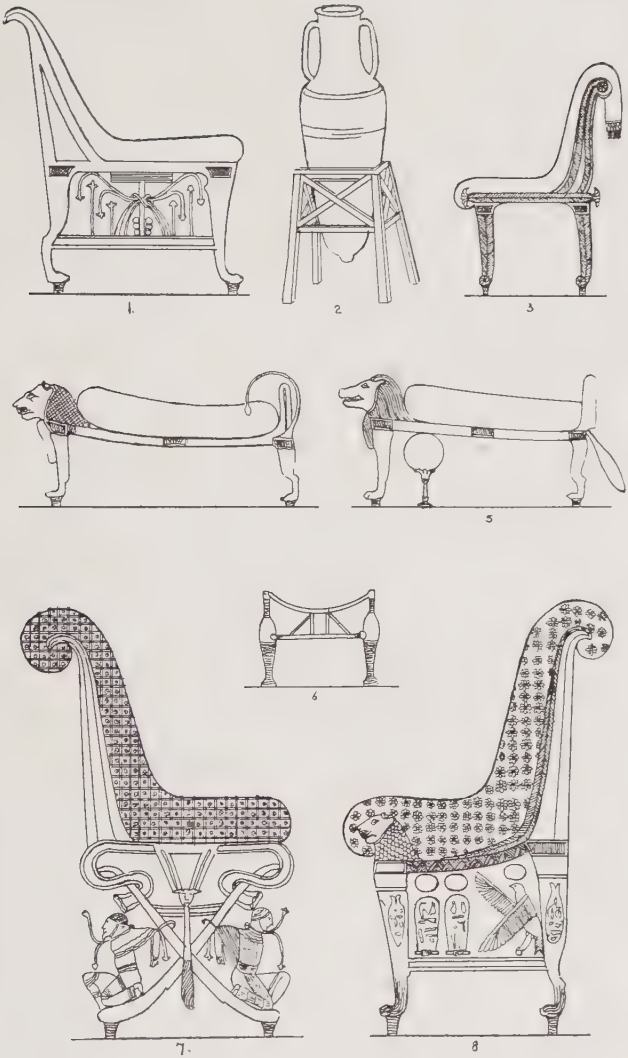
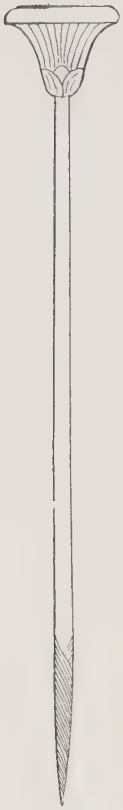
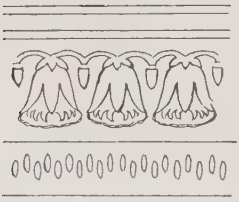


Fig. 1. EGYPTIAN FURNITURE

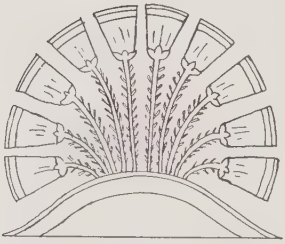


REPRESENTATION OF
PAPYRVS PLANT

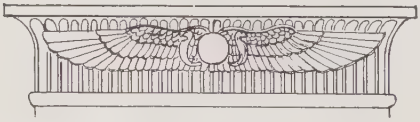
Complete type of Cap
Shaft & Base of Egyptian Column.



FROM A SARCOPHAGVS.
IN THE LOVVRE.



EGYPTIAN DESERT PLANT



ENTABLATVRE OVER DOOR-WAY OF
THE TEMPLE OF PHILÆ

G.F.Galloway. del.

Fig. 2. EGYPTIAN DETAILS

powerful and graceful from the column, spreading to its burden as naturally as a calyx widens from the stem. Indeed it is just that, — a calyx on a stem, the graceful curve of the bud forming the capital without a break in continuity, a delight to the eye, a satisfaction to the reason.

The earliest forms of household furniture are those left us by the Egyptians, — all found in those exciting tombs which the engaging explorer is ever exposing to a delighted world. This furniture inclines towards animal forms more than vegetable in its construction. The chairs are straight and honest, and were meant to hold burdens frankly, and not to dissemble by cabriole legs and slanting backs.

The principles were sound, based on the requirements of the inexorable laws of gravity and the frangibility of household goods; but so harmonious was the drawing of chairs and stools that man has been pleased to copy certain of them in modern times. There is a bit of humour in the fact that when explorers recently opened the tomb of the parents of Queen Tii, and found there two superb chairs, the specimens were promptly named Empire and Louis Seize.

Seeing how firmly the beasts stood upon four pads, the designer of that time gave to man, the two-footed and fatigued, the luxury of rest on four feet, where no laws of balance persecute the weary muscles. In other words, his favourite model for chairs was fitted

with animals' legs or feet, and a couch of them represented an entire beast.

Perhaps we do not care to copy these forms for our present use, but it is satisfactory to have traced our much-prized claw-foot to its antique source. It is with a joy almost malicious that we find the Greeks guilty of stealing artistic thunder from the Egyptian, for late Egypt and early Greece take on a similarity of line. And if for no other reason, it were worth while to pore over Egyptian decoration to be able to correctly read the product of the artists in the First Empire of France. This seems a slight reason for investigation, almost an affront to the student of Egypt, but his pardon is begged, and the explanation is made that the hunt is not for mythology, nor yet for the religion of a people whose development led the ancient world, but is for all that ministers to that most catholic of hunters for beauty, the trained eye.

The Egyptians with their many gods were rich in symbolism. In a vague way we know that a scarab had a sacred meaning, that a winged ball had another, and the spirit of these things is not lost, even though with ridiculous unfitness we use a copy of the desert Sphinx as a paperweight and serve bonbons on the symbol of eternity. On the contrary, there is a positive pleasure in knowing that the things about us are full of meaning, be it grave or gay.

The modern world of design is like a cosmopolitan gathering of men. The question of where each one

came from is of consuming interest to the observer. To know where each symbol and class of design originated, as the eye distinguishes between one and another, is not only a pleasure but a protection, a defense against hybrid invention both inartistic and incongruous.

II. POMPEIAN

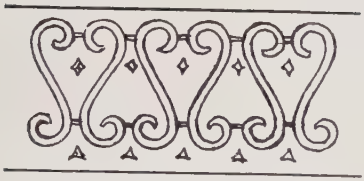
When doting parents are compelled to show photographs of their adored family instead of the palpitating loveliness of the children themselves, their feelings are as mine in mentioning Pompeii. The pictures show the loved object as it never looks except in a picture, uncompromisingly changeless, lacking in atmosphere and in those exquisite and infinite varieties that are its peculiar charm. Explain and amplify as one will, the photograph creates but indifference. Colour it too, with the best quality of water paints to assist imagination, but can the flush on photographic gray equal the delicious glowing texture of the skin of childhood; can it produce remotely the piquant qualities of change that occur in the moving lights?

As with these paper shadows of children, so with photographs of that fascinating, exquisite little city under the shadow of Vesuvius. The photographs are recognisable, yes, but soulless as the shell of a locust. Personal acquaintance, personal contact with the drawing and the colour of the place are necessary

for its understanding. As the child in the photograph gives none of itself, bestows no winning caress, so the little city of dainty homes refuses its endearing charms to all except those who take the trouble to visit her, to observe her moods and to learn her happy characteristics. To these she speaks with unforgetable eloquence.

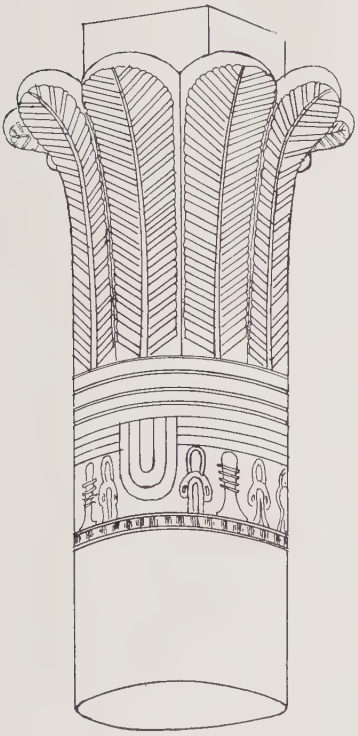
And so the charity of understanding leads one to wonder at those who, never having seen, will yet dare to copy a style that seems at first flush cold, thin, and out of keeping with the note of lavish luxury that characterises our day. But whether copied or not, it is to be studied with loving enthusiasm as being the highest perfection of style that art has given us, of all atmospheres the most chaste, of all lines the purest, of all details the most exquisite. And as the details are adaptable to almost all simple schemes of house-decoration, a certain familiarity with their original use is needed for their complete understanding, and that they may yield their full gift of pleasure to the observer. All of Greek and all of Roman detail at their best are found in Pompeii; and in knowing her we know all except those matters that have to do more with architecture than with the embellishment that completes the home.

This then is the plea for remarks on a style which it may not be desirable to reproduce in every particular; that in detail it is the most beautiful ever produced, and that from it proceed many later styles



POMPEIIAN FRIEZE

POMPEIIAN PILASTER



EGYPTIAN CAPITAL
FROM TEMPLE OF EDFV.

G.F.Galloway. del.

Fig. 3. DETAILS, POMPEIAN AND EGYPTIAN

Fig. 4 POMPEIAN TEMPLE TABLE

Fig. 5. DETAILS FROM POMPEII

with which we are familiar, and which are simply revivals or adaptations.

The Pompeian house is the only dwelling we moderns ever copy from the antique with any degree of fidelity, because it is the only one of a size appropriate to our needs. It is piquant in its indifference to the world, turning to the street a front insolently devoid of ornament; but once inside, the charm of its carefully studied interior falls like a grateful dew on the senses. It were impossible to enter such a house with other than a smiling face and glowing eyes.

It is this power to charm at the very threshold that makes the Pompeian style desirable for the entrance to our modern houses, though it be continued no further. Its appropriateness for this use has been demonstrated often enough to lift it from the field of experiment, but it is never tried to the dissatisfaction of the owner. A Pompeian room is always a success because its taste is unquestioned and its beauty never tires.

I have in mind several crude horrors that have blinded the eyes and caused an actual shrinking sensation to the body, which were called Pompeian rooms. In these, flat colour surfaces of glaring red or yellow or black were broken by impossible massive figures, set midway between floor and ceiling, the whole bordered with small, weak designs in many colours. Do such rooms remotely suggest the exquisite soft colours of the real Pompeii? Do they

not rather recall the dead craze called decalcomania?

It is not of such I speak, not of the German paperhanger's diluted and perverted reminiscence of the traditions of his trade, but of the true Pompeii with colour so exquisite as to produce an actual physical thrill on beholding it; of colour so rich as to claim the repose of the eye as a soft couch invites repose to the body; colours so exquisite that for the moment form is forgotten and the sense of sight holds intoxicated revel in tint and shading of yellows, greens, and reds; these tones are in the mind, these and many others cooler and more elusive, and are inseparable from the true Pompeian room.

It is one of the happy things of our times that taste among artisans and tradesmen is improving, and men can be found who will adhere conscientiously and lovingly to the antique. And yet it seems to be that the exquisite daintiness of Pompeian walls is impossible to reproduce. That is partly because Time is an artist whose finishing touches we value, but for whom we cannot afford to wait.

And this makes it desirable to adopt the feeling of the styles in its colouring rather than to try to reproduce frescoes that are not reproducible. A sweep of plain colour, of the indefinite green which plays over the sea at ebb tide, the white that suggests old ivory, of the toned red that makes a welcome glow from the walls, — these things are better than a fol-

lowing of the impossible; and all of these plain surfaces may be bordered with any of the charming designs in which Pompeii is so rich.

The fluted columns are such gratifying characteristics of the courts of dwellings in the unburied city that it seems a pity for any house to omit them. Out there in the sun of the Italian noon, or, in the purple of the twilight, and whether whole or mutilated, they bespeak a generous dignity. Set in our own modern homes, the dignity is still there and is imparted to the house it ornaments.

Flat pilasters, fluted or plain, these are indispensable for the architectonic effect desired. Add simple wood-work and a mosaic floor, and the Pompeian room is ready for its furniture. Does it look cold in its purity? Perhaps, but it is not made as a lounging room. It has the reserve of the house entrance, — a place where those who would enter the sanctuary of home must wait and give just reason why they may be admitted, the surroundings meanwhile answering for the integrity of the owner. This is the intent of any ante-chamber, which is, after all, a place of neutrality, one where the applicant must feel a certain ceremony, and yet an elegance and taste which are due his intelligence and position. The happy dignity of the Pompeian style makes it the ideal for the entrance hall of the modern dwelling.

The furniture too is appropriate for the uses of ceremony. Those original moveables that have

resisted destruction are all of stone or metal; and while true in line and exquisite in detail, apparently contributed but little to the bodily ease which is of first importance in all rooms except the entrance hall.

In the gardens of certain houses in Pompeii are reproductions of various small pieces of furniture found in the locality; but these being garden furniture are strong and simple, yet dainty withal. It was as though the people of that day and time felt their choicest room to be the one of which Heaven supplied the roof and Nature the decoration. Here were set images of dancing fauns and satyrs as though even such free creatures of wood and hilltop would find accustomed pleasures there. And here were disposed un-awesome seats and tables that invited genial intercourse of friends.

Few but exquisite are the bronze tables and chairs that outlived the centuries of burial. They are reproduced seldom, but are a never-failing wonder and delight even when viewed in the unsympathetic atmosphere of a museum. Lamps and candlesticks and smaller bronzes show the consummate skill of both designer and worker, and have a power all their own of thrilling him whose happy privilege it is to stand before them and worshipfully gaze. They are the *ne plus ultra* of refined beauty, — a beauty without sensuousness, a beauty that never could have sprung from other source than souls of purity, from

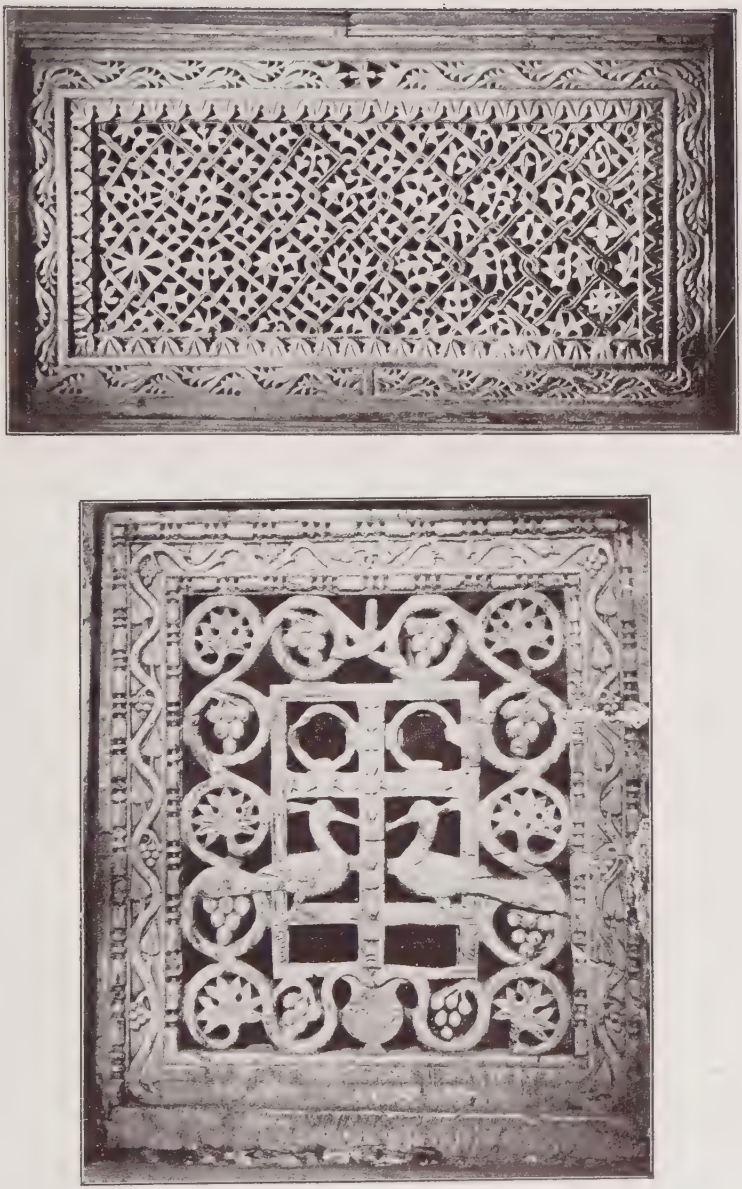


Fig. 6. BYZANTINE CARVING, RAVENNA

Fig. 7. BRONZE SEAT, POMPEII

Fig. 8. POMPEIAN INTERIOR

minds of lofty aspiration. It is this beauty thus qualified that is Pompeii's gift to the world.

As to the floor of a Pompeian entrance room, it is imperatively mosaic. The mosaics of the ancient city are infinitely finer than those we are accustomed to use. Labour is cheap in Italy, — pitifully so, one thinks in looking on its abuse, — and there one might perhaps copy mosaics in their original fineness. But our larger squares will do as well, for they are on the same principle, a pattern picked out in tiny cubes. A plain sweep of solid colour for the centre of the room, and a geometric border in deeper tone or black is enough, if rugs or skins are to spread concealment upon the floor.

As the ancients allowed themselves the luxury of textiles to soften the asperity of hard surroundings, so also may we in emulation hang mellowing fabrics. When the ships of the Mediterranean brought rich embroideries and textiles from the East, the people of Pompeii prized them rarely, and made luxurious use of them. Therein lies a happy suggestion for ourselves.

To dismiss Pompeii with a sketchy summary of the salient points of its domiciles is like telling the whole philosophy of life in three letters. It is almost to run the risk of appearing flippant, impious from the artist's point of view. But the study of Pompeii is the study of a life, and our intent is only to make a home in which to live, and to be about it quickly.

III. GOTHIC

Europe left us no special style adaptable to modern domestic use previous to the period just preceding the Renaissance, but to architects the time was full of riches, and to historians full of interest.

Rome fell, and Christianity arose. That is the historical fact; the result to art was the loss of the Roman influence and the development of the Christian. The Roman Emperor Constantine, conqueror of the Greeks, saw a cross in the sky, and became a zealot in the new religion which had the cross as its symbol. He transferred the capital from Rome to Byzantium, and there brought artists of Greece and Rome to blend the symbolism of the new religion with the old forms, and on these he grafted an art hitherto buried, the Christian art of the Catacombs. Moulding all these styles together he breathed into them the ardent breath of the inspired, the man who has had revealed to him the wondrous Spirit of God, — and lo, the style we call Byzantine, followed with the Romanesque, styles which in the South developed into the Gothic or pointed style.

The styles of Europe previous to the thirteenth century, while rich in architecture, furnish but little suggestion in the way of interior fittings for the modern home. Look for explanation to the manner of life at that time, when every man's house was his fortress, and, being often the scene of sharp defense,

was appropriately massive in wall, generous in size, and sparse in furniture. The enormous hall was the important room of the mediæval castle, the room which was the scene for all the brutal romance of the Middle Ages. How was it fitted up for the many and changing events which surged against its grim, enclosing walls? It was got ready for those hearty, feasting crowds with which Mr. Maurice Hewlett makes us sympathetically familiar, — crowds whose indulgences would revolt the palate and all other senses of the people of to-day. Cleaned of the rabble, the hall served as a scene for romances between long-haired corseleted ladies and their velvet-cloaked suitors; and again it was filled with a clanking mass of soldiers in armour waiting the arrival of a foe, whose coming was known by the dust upon the road espied by eager eyes in the watch-towers above. As the foe came nearer, and steel clashed steel, the hall became an actual battle ground, from whence fled the lord's whole family to shelter in rooms above.

With what manner of furniture could such a home conveniently be fitted? Naturally with those things which are portable and which serve many purposes. When pages in the second act of "Lohengrin" fall to decorating for Elsa's wedding, they are but historically correct. A few, a very few bits of furniture are placed, and the effect of warmth and luxury is given only as these little pages trip about,

arranging hangings over the stone-work of the building.

Very much like a stage was the hall in these old castles of the Middle Ages, — the stage of a travelling company which economises its properties. If the play dealt with knights and ladies, falconing parties or feasts, the big coffers were set, plank-tops were laid on frames to make tables, and the arras were hung over the forbidding stone walls, innocent of plaster or panel.

But if the play was one of conflict, thrust of sword, clash of steel and flow of blood, the arras were torn from the wall, thrust within the yawning coffers and whisked up stone stairs with the disappearing heel of the last flying maid or paling page.

And sometimes expediency or adventure, or restlessness ordered that the whole castleful be off to some other of my lord's possessions, and needs must that the household be accompanied with its goods, for none were where the company was migrating, neither would any be found on returning. To supply furniture for one house only was to live up to the standard of the time, and to leave furniture in an empty house was to give it to the first who rode that way.

So the people of those times have left us the riches of the architecture that sheltered them at home and at worship, but no great store of furniture to descend to reverent and delighted worshippers of the

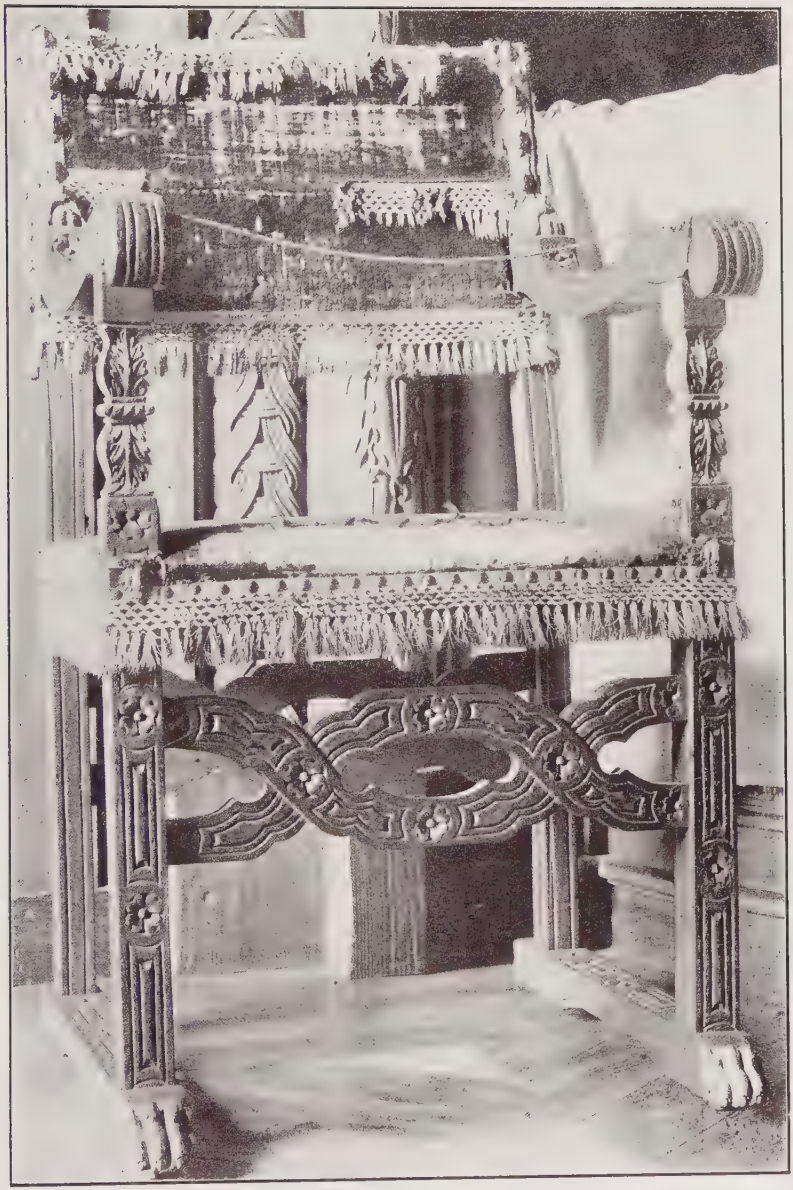


Fig. 9. FRENCH GOTHIC CHAIR

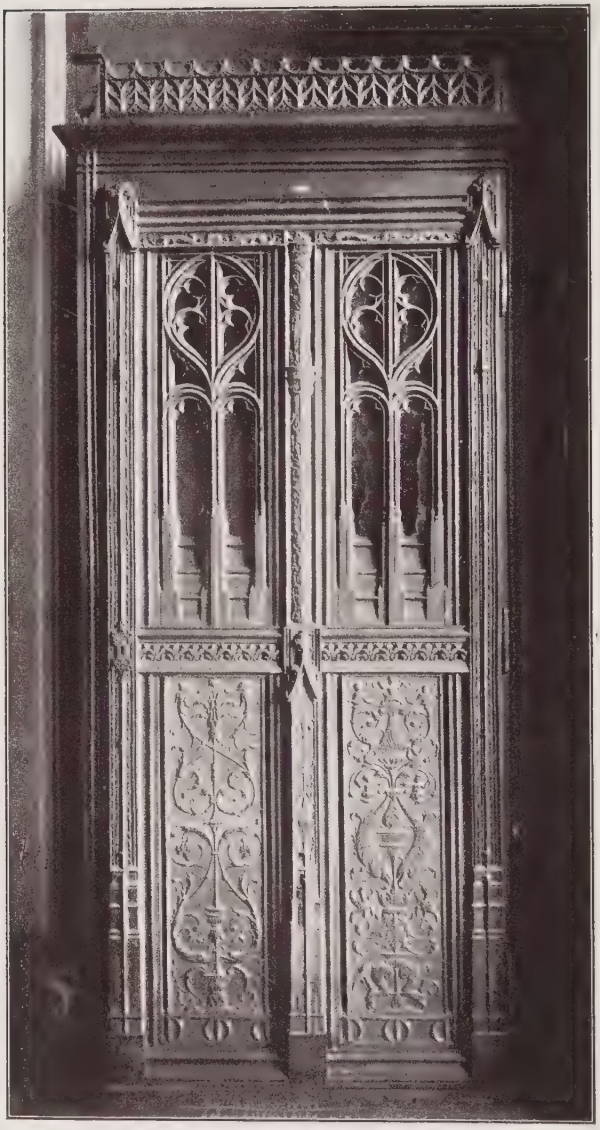


Fig. 10. ARMOIRE, XV CENTURY
Showing Combination of Gothic and Renaissance

antique. But those they have left, — the occasional chair, the more frequent and varied coffer, and the adorable arras, — these we approach in worshipful spirit and pay reverence to Time, the finishing artist.

Like the Byzantine the Gothic was the expression of such religious fervour as the modern world knows of only by record. In an endeavour to serve religion, and to express it, through art, symbolism so abounded that signs of the Trinity and of the Evangelists are not disassociable from Gothic designs, the trefoil and quatrefoil form being an integral part of nearly every detail, and so proclaiming faith to the world through the mute evidence of stone and wood.

From great religious movements to furniture and household trappings seems a far cry, but it was not so in the days when the best designers and workers were employed, first of all on the construction of buildings and moveables for religious uses. Temples to the Unknown, whether in Egypt or in Europe, are the best extant remains of man's handiwork in ancient days. Fancy the apprentices of the Gothic period in all of the trades associated with building, getting their first instruction from masters whose best work was ever and always ecclesiastic. The church stood for all that was skilful in construction, all that was beautiful in detail, all that was symbolic in design. Add to this the personal religious fervour of each worker which

was one of the features of the age, and we can readily see how art was but the necessary evidence of an ardour that clamoured for expression. The best talent, the most skilful labour was secured for the work, while the people stinted themselves to provide the pay.

It is this very stinting that has caused such a scarcity of relics for home use. The church was all, the home was nothing — speaking broadly — in the Gothic days. It was very largely a time of strife as well, a rude period where only the physically fit survived, and these had little inclination to cultivate the gentle luxuries of peace.

Where are all the pieces of furniture with which they lived? The Gothic period was not so long ago that we could not have something left; so where are the great sideboards on which the boar's hide must have rested, the desk at which fair ladies wrote frail vows to gentlemen in armour? Of such there were none. In our days of complicated necessities it is hard to imagine a lady happy in the privations of the home of the moyenage. In fancying these lovely ladies with banded brow and braided hair falling far over the jewelled girdle, all idea of conveniences and luxuries must be eliminated, however difficult the task. We, the poorest of us, have furniture undreamed of in that time, and are luxurious beyond the dreams of then existing royalty.

And so it happens that while Gothic architecture

is rich in wondrous cathedrals, relics of articles for home use are rare. Their characteristics are the same as those shown in church architecture, for the reason mentioned before; all artists and workers were trained in the service of the church; to meet its material requirements was their sole aim, and knowing no other methods they applied them to the home.

The result is that a chair looks strongly like a choir stall, and a chest is not unlike an altar; while taller pieces bring out the ecclesiastic qualities more strongly. And never does one get far from architectural features. The feeling is that the man who constructed and carved the piece of furniture set about it with the cathedral motif established in his mind. Ribs and groins were as much a part of a bed as of a transept, and the detail of carving was rich with symbolism of threes and fours and circles. A piece of furniture was made to look like a miniature of the whole or a perfected bit of ornament detached from place.

But it is a happy feature of the exquisite art of that time that its lines and details intoxicate the senses with their loveliness equally in both miniature and grandeur. The thrill felt in the cathedral aisle is not entirely absent in the presence of some of the exquisite pieces of Gothic furniture at the Louvre and the Musée de Cluny. The richness of the wood colour, its mellow depth of tone, its suggestion of soft

and sympathetic texture, — these gifts of Time enhance the beauty of man's wondrous craft and inventions, and we wonder why man ever wandered away from the Gothic.

It was a time when the chest still formed the most important single article of furniture, and on its broad surfaces most wondrous patterns were worked out with a devotion to art that one can scarcely understand in a people whose lives were filled with fierce stress of war and of struggle against remorseless enemies.

These chests had come down from pre-historic times, had been at first made as the savage fashions his crude canoe, by hollowing a log, then had become a rectangular box, and at last were made beautiful. Even at the Gothic period they served many uses, — so many that probably no household was without one or more. Primarily a chest is a receptacle, but it makes also a comfortable seat, and might at the same time serve as table. Doubtless many a tired soldier has lain down on one, thankful for its services as a bed. They have a history, these chests of the Middle Ages, — one in which glory increases with the years, until the full height is reached in the wonderful Italian marriage coffers of the Renaissance.

We are grateful possessors of what the Gothic period has left us of these cases, and an occasional armoire and chair, a study of which is a liberal educa-

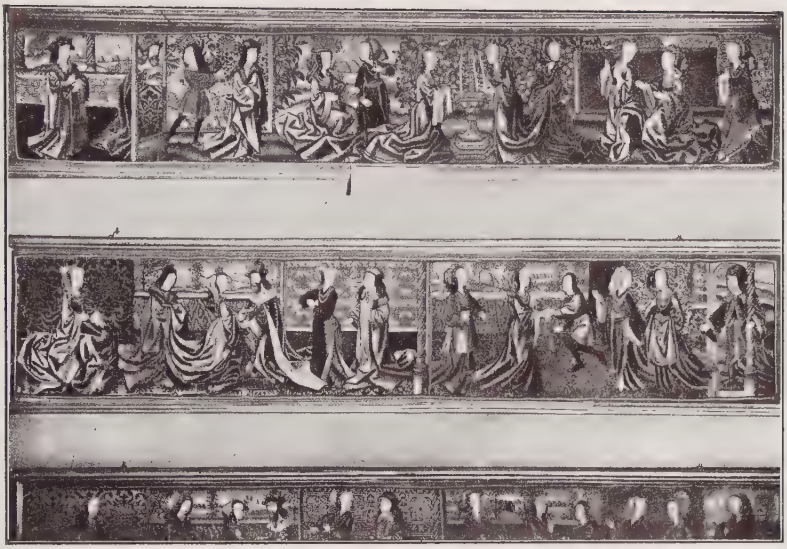


Fig. 11. GOTHIC TAPESTRY
King David and the Queen of Sheba

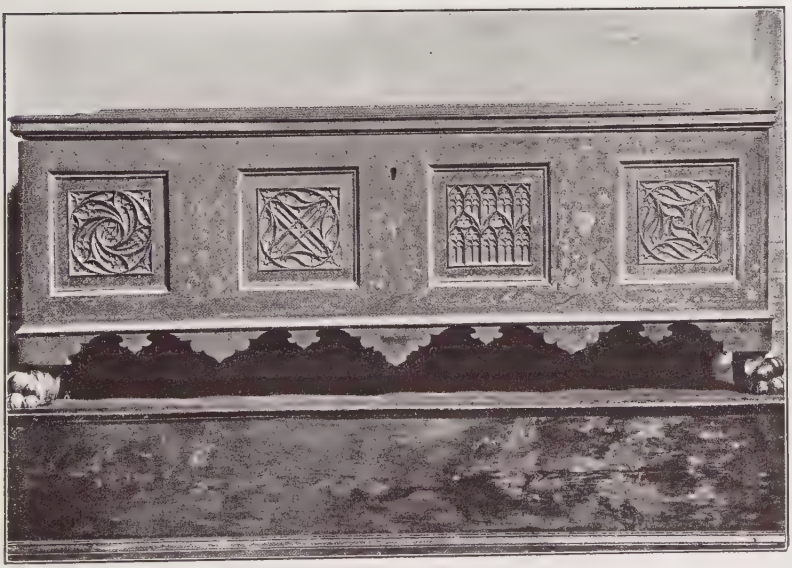


Fig. 12. CASSONE WITH GOTHIC PANELS AND INLAY

Fig. 13. GOTHIC CHEST

Fig. 14. FRENCH GOTHIC BAHUT

tion on what was once considered a new art, but which may now be accounted a lost one.

Side by side with the Gothic was the Romanesque, fantastic as the former in its bulbous perversion of the acanthus leaf, in its complex combination of human and animal forms with the arboreal and vegetable, but in construction as different as are the people of the South from people of the North, for in the two districts did the two styles flourish. But the Romanesque is for the student of architecture, and with such we leave it.

CHAPTER III

THE RENAISSANCE

WITH appropriate humility and with profound apologies to the true artist, and to art's historians as well, do I introduce into a handbook of home furnishing the profound and inexhaustible subject of the Renaissance.

But even as the sun dominates the world, yet illumines its smallest corner, so the great light of the Renaissance is reflected in the many minor designs with which we are familiar, not, perhaps, knowing their origin.

Architecture and painting express the period, and sit enthroned as the great results of the great awakening; but the humbler and more intimate departments of art, the smaller productions that we hug to our hearts as being more human, these also reflect the time with fidelity. There is scarce a detail of a modern chair, nor a design on a tapestry that is not traceable to the great period. The smallest things of the home show it quite as much as the works great artists left behind them to vex and perplex the maturest counsel of the less talented.

It is then far from disrespectful for the home beautifier to consider that the Renaissance speaks also unto such as he. Once having rid ourselves of the fear of the company of gods, let us walk boldly among them and see what they have given us, that we may the better understand what is around us, recognise its beauty, and know the why.

In walking through the spring woods or between the autumn hedge-rows it is surely pleasant to be able to say to each flower in passing, "I know you, sweet friend, you are cousin to the pink; and you, a sister of the sweet-pea." But this is nothing to the joy that stirs the blood when the educated eye detects among antique furnishings a scroll, a shell, — a construction or detail that is traceable at once to the Renaissance.

It is this ability that has an unending charm, and the exercise of the same will carry its possessor on wilder hunts than ever followed the wild goose. No greater joy is known to any collector than that of saying to himself, and to a wondering friend, "This piece is Italian Renaissance; and this, its later English echo." Out of museums these things must be, of course, for to find your darlings tagged and labelled, set apart as curios of State or city, what is that? No better, forsooth, than to visit an arid deer-pen in the park, where the daintiest animals that have bounded through the mossy shades of the ancient wood since fauns went out of fashion are set on

dreary exhibition, with name and habitat duly posted for the man who runs to read.

See your dainty deer at feed among the lilies of a sapphire mountain lake, and know him from the tree-boles of his setting, if your heart is to beat faster at the sight; and find your ancient relic of men no longer ancient (because their works declare their living power), unlabelled, undistinguished. Then is it your joy to detect on carving or moulding or weaving the touch of the Renaissance, to know your man, so to speak; and knowing him to let the sympathetic spark leap from your eye, the smile of welcome curve your lip. If you do not taste this joy, this subtle fruitful way of knowing men who have refused to die with their bodies' surrender, then you miss the greatest happiness art can give.

In a far-off relation, just as a cat may look at that other product of the animal kingdom, a king, and in that way claim relationship, so does the furniture of a period partake recognisably of the feeling of its architecture. Perhaps this is discouraging, for it might impose upon the conscientious furniture-buyer the necessity of entering into the wide field of study that lies before the professional architect. Not at all unprofitable is a little judicious smattering of architecture, and so far from being irksome, it is a positive delight to dip into it with an irresponsible lightsome touch, skipping happily from what one is wont to consider as Bible times, to engraft an inter-

esting detail on the Greek; to add to this, voluptuous lines of the Roman, symbols of Byzantium, wierd details of Romanesque, exquisite asceticism of the osseous Gothic, and finally to reach the great revival which was but (then) modern adaptations of the antique. From stones such as these may even the lightest, most inconsequent collector of antique beauty build a firm foundation for the taste that is in him, and with but little pains to himself and no pedantry to vex his friends.

A knowledge (just a harmless surface knowledge) of architecture is to the collector like a mooring to a boat, is like a measuring stick to the joiner; it is a key to the puzzle. Often and often a chair, a picture-frame, a table, saunters, so to speak, with a baffling swagger from some dusty corner with the old challenge which Rumpelstiltskin of Grimm's fairy tale flung at the queen, "Who am I?" No one you have ever seen before, most assuredly — but hold, the tribal marks of the piece lie exposed. The construction shows the solidity of the bellicose Middle Ages, the detail is Greek. Early Renaissance proclaims the collector with a shout of triumph. And of what country? That too is revealed to the initiated who has dipped into architecture with no higher purpose than the better understanding of those smaller objects which architecture made possible for man to harbour.

From the Renaissance we date everything. As in

Sunday-school days everything ethnological flew reliably and satisfactorily straight back to the Pair in the Garden, so now (barring the wonderful products of the unspeakable East) we turn back to the great period of revival for the inspiration or origin of everything produced after the Middle Ages, and this in all countries.

Why the art world was content to go to sleep after its Greek perfection, its Roman affluence, or its Christian symbolism, none knows, and some deny. The theory is not a little interesting that the cause of this was traceable to religion. Christianity prevailed through Europe, Christianity held that at the end of a thousand years after Christ the world was to come to an end. What a paralysing bug-a-boo to place before producers! Of what use to build, to improve in skill, to acquire renown or to be concerned with material things that were to serve in the end merely as food for flames. Surely a more effective blight could not have been put upon artistic ambition, or any other, for that matter, except the somewhat questionably selfish occupation of saving one's own soul.

With this as the accepted theory man's ambition and man's hands were both stopped. And thus, they say, came about that long period of non-productiveness of which the tenth century formed the deadest, the epitome. The dread year came and went. Even the men who insisted on a different

count, as men were known to wrangle at the birth of the enlightened century in which we live, even those early disputants saw their appointed dates pass, and the world go stolidly on her way, non-committingly following her accustomed routine of warm sun and blossom, cold rain and fallen leaf. Perhaps they even thought they had miscounted an entire century. However it was, folk began to take heart of hope after the years had proved the happy falsity of man's prophecy, and in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries thought it worth while after all to live for the morrow, and to endeavour to make that morrow more gracious by the cultivation of the gentler arts.

The church, always the church, was the patron of art. It has remained for our own times, our own cities, to subjugate architecture to the uses of trade and finance, so that the stranger is shown, not the artist's inspired design for the worship of the Unknown, but the latest bank, the most classically perfect business building. If it was due to the superstitions and legends of religion that the world was expected to end in the thousandth year of Christianity, so also was it in the church and her institutions that the art of the Middle Ages hid trembling and fearsome.

The monk bending over his missals in the haven of his cell did his share in supporting the slight bridge from darkness to the Renaissance. And when the great revival came it was animate with the soul of

religion. To express the faith that was in him was the primary desire of the artist, and in religious fervour he approached his work. What was Giotto but the spirit of religion making itself manifest through the soul-guided hand of man. Could his art have burst the bands of Byzantine convention to express pure spirituality unless the man himself had been but a vessel filled from that inspired fount? We speak of the earlier men, be it understood, for the high Renaissance led men more towards the expression of intellectuality, just as the late Renaissance led through materialism to decadence.

The best of every man's best then went as naturally to the church as rivers to the ocean; but after that the increase of luxury and self-indulgence deflected the stream to the homes of the mighty. And as artists were not then specialists of one expression only, but were craftsmen of all versatility, so the time became rich in every department of beauty. Those who could paint could also work in metals or in wood, and the fingers that held brushes thought it not incompatible with the fine arts to practise the craft of the artisan. And this is one reason why inspiration for any sort of work can be found in those wondrous two centuries.

Very little do we find previous to this at all available for use in our homes, — always excepting the pure Greek as exemplified by Pompeii, — and yet this casual tracing of the history of art is necessary to

even the lightest appreciation of what we see about us every day. And as history goes hand in hand with art, or rather as art is its enduring reflection and exponent, so must we ever bear it in mind as the reason why. History is a matter of masses and publicity, but we in our romantic search seek the individual. We follow man to his home and learn there to know his real and more amenable self. Yet as it is one and the same man who plays both parts, the warrior and the gentleman, so we must know his history as well as his home life.

Again, if the Renaissance had been solely an affair of the country which cradled it, it would have remained peculiarly an Italian development; but it spread to all important countries of Europe, in each place taking on local colour. It is almost like a bursting of bonds. It is as though all the countries of the Continent had lain like Samson bound, until Italy awoke and proved her strength, and lo, one after another the captives followed her example and gave expression to art.

But even as one race differs from another, so also each country expressed itself with a difference, and therein lie the delectable pleasures of the connoisseur — in the detection of these differences. And without the smattering of history we cannot have this skill, — so, to understand (and understanding is love), you cannot entirely enjoy the antique chest, the church embroidery, the ancient cross, — that

rest in the chamber they enrich with their enchanting atmosphere.

It began in Italy, and there reached its highest. Are not even the Italians of to-day jealous of their own Renaissance? And greater praise than this can no man give. And where else but in Italy, the land of forcing and caressing sun, the land of inspired dreams, could art so wondrously grow and flower. But alas, by the same natural regrettable process that Shakespeare attributed to man, "From year to year we ripe and ripe, and then from year to year we rot and rot," so the Italian decadence set in. But of that later.

Simultaneousness was not accomplished among the nations then as now. France was still in the moyenage of art, while Italy was rejoicing in the surpassing beauty of her own development. The travellers of the time were the most fascinating of all fanatics, the combination of warrior, brigand, and devotee, the Crusaders. Like travellers with less saintly motives they returned with strange and beautiful products of foreign lands, hangings of Eastern stuffs, wrought metals, chests of strange design which held their trophies, — and all these served as inspiration to the artistic workers at home. But France's wars with Italy circulated hundreds of men between the two countries where the Crusaders numbered tens, and by means of this penetration (belligerent though it was), into the garden of art, men

were enabled to transplant some of the beauties into their own country. This, with the aid of imported artists, established the Renaissance in France under Francis I.

Flanders had an awakening away up in the North with the Van Eycks and Memling to the fore; Spain came closely following, and England imported the seeds of her Renaissance, flowering directly from Italy through Italian protegés of Henry VIII. In the North Germany awoke, and so the whole of Christendom bloomed, each garden-patch producing according to its climate and its soil, all alike, yet all different.

IN ITALY

And what has the Renaissance done to make beautiful our modern homes? — is the practical suggestion that follows the strong-and-bitter ale of history. The answer to that is found in a million things that gratify the eye, that thrill the touch, that fire the imagination.

The great awakening showed man the possibilities of beautifying life for himself as well as for the church, and private luxury became a master who ordered comforts with no niggardly compunctions. Comfort was indeed a new word, a new gratification in the way of house-furnishing, and as luxury is a habit more than easy to accept gracefully, the demand for better personal equipments grew apace.

And so artists, true artists, in those days could both design a church, and hammer a silver placque, without injury to reputation as an artist, so small wares received distinguished attention. And that is the secret of their charm and their worth, the reason why they have so long stood as models of beauty.

Straight back to the Greek these men went for their inspiration, as Brunelleschi with his architecture and Borgognone with his details. And that pure fount yielded living waters for the nourishment of the new school which was the Art Nouveau of the time.

But the object not being a slavish copy, designs varied according to the artistic fancy of the artist. And that wonderful element called temperament played its part as surely as Nature asserts herself. The Italian is not a Greek in feeling, the austerity of the Greek is not his, nor the asceticism. So when he had pored over old models and knew them as his alphabet, he took the old motif and let his temperament play upon it with infinite and sensuous variations until his fantasy and poetry saw itself in tangible form.

To know, to identify, the objects which come under his searching eye is the joy of the collector. Identification is simplified a hundred fold, and given an added fascination by using this key, the temperament of the nation or the temper of the age that

Fig. 15. ITALIAN CABINET, XVI CENTURY

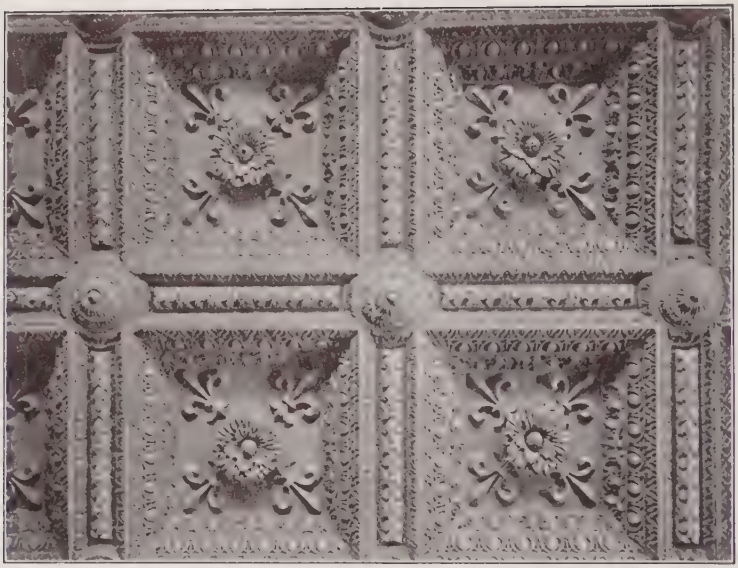


Fig. 16. CEILING PALAZZO VECCHIO, FLORENCE

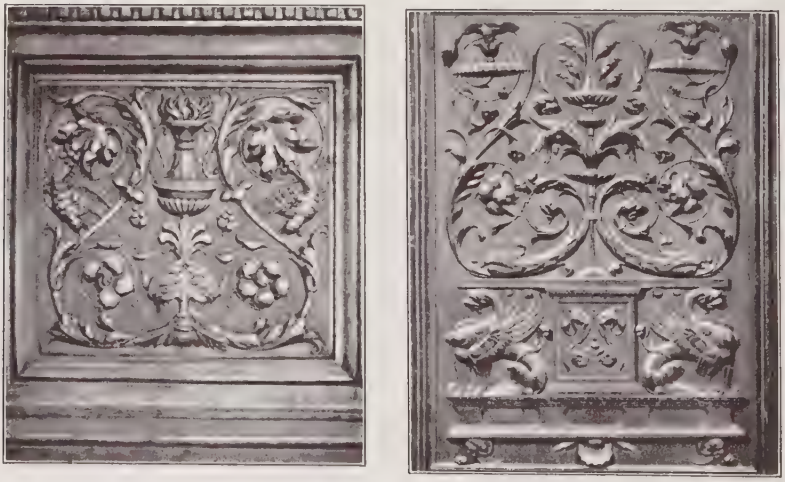


Fig. 17. CARVING, ITALIAN RENAISSANCE

produces. And so products of the Italian Renaissance can be distinguished from others by their poetic exuberance, their tendency to over-express, as though each man was surcharged with feeling. Yet until the decadence nothing offended of all this riot. It was history repeating itself, for centuries before, had not the Romans built their over-ornamented, bulky high-relief on the patterns of the conquered Greek? The best of the Italian Renaissance is also Greek. And this Greek revival occurs again three hundred years later, but that will be considered in its place.

The chest or coffer, bahut or cassone, whichever name best conveys meaning, as it already existed, was taken as a field of experiment in household fittings, and the rise and fall of the Renaissance can be traced in its form and decoration, the crudeness of the dawn, the chaste beauty of the early time, the over-ripe embellishment of the decay. Who would have difficulty in placing these pieces chronologically, with a little bit of history tucked comfortably away in the mind, as a jeweller keeps his test diamond?

These chests once of carved wood evolved into the gilded marriage coffers, rich with decoration, replete with detail, and formed as ever an important piece in the household.

Chairs of the Renaissance are not impossible to find, although it is safe to assume that most of them

are in museums. Chairs were rare in those days compared to now, and antiques are not impossible to manufacture by hands eager for coins. Yet one of these sixteenth century Italian chairs was discovered ten years ago, when the last attic had not been invaded, in York, Maine, the family legend being that an ancestral captain on one of those picturesque voyages of the past, bought it in Italy as a doge's chair. It may not have been the latter, but Italian Renaissance it certainly is, and with its rich wood, faint lines of inlay and scrolls full of poetic feeling, it exceeds in richness some of those in the National Museum at Florence.

Venice abounded in the cross-chair, a curving letter X which formed a comfortable arm-chair; at least it was more of a sleepy-hollow to the weary than a perch on a high straight chair or a backless stool. A strap across the back and a cushion in the seat covered with one of the wonderful stuffs or tapestries from the handlooms of the times, made of this carved or inlaid piece a luxury for the well-to-do. The shape is common enough now, and has been, from earliest history to the time when a folding camp-chair filled a long-felt rustic want.

Even through the drastic Middle Ages the bed was a usual article of furniture, although it is probable that many a bed was of the moment's making when wayfarers slept in the open and peasants huddled on straw. Gothic beds took on the look of sacerdotal

severity which could scarce have contributed to the peace of mind of any unhappy wight who went to bed unshrived. There was accusation in their very chasteness.

But the bed of Italy in the marvellous Cinque Cento and the century which followed, that was a rest around which the idealised poetry of dreams is draped in rich stuffs, a temple of man's most exquisite conceit. Here, sleep, and more especially the sweet illusionary time preceding, and the rosy hour which bounds it at the farther end, are coaxed into yet greater value by beauty's intimate contact. To-day's prosaic going to bed on a sanitary gridiron — however concealed by brass St. Lawrence would recognise and avoid it — can bring no such tender close to the day as is wrought by finding refuge in the shelter of the carved Italian temple of sleep. Here the plucking fingers of the day's pettiness cease their distraction, and care falls back ashamed. Who enters here leaves care behind, and moreover finds in its stead a sweet sinking into lethean atmosphere, while the body melts into a luxurious surrender.

Its form is architectural, a base and a roof supported on four orders. Nothing could be simpler, also nothing could be more imposing. The columns are carved to combine the revived classic detail with the spirit of the time. Fluted columns set in acanthus leaves supported by a wide urn, all terminating in a colossal foot, show the combination spirited and ele-

gant which expressed the designer's fancy. The tester with its long panels gave opportunity for the fine carving of low relief in floral scrolls that were a feature of this period, and gave to a bed not only the look of a temple, but brought to the eyes that lay under it the shadow of cosy retreat, and to the mind a delicious sense of fate's impotence to harm one so happily protected. Happy eyes might smile briefly on its broad surface, and wide wakeful eyes of sadness might gaze in the night-watches and be comforted. When we go to bed, we are but bundles laid too frankly in the open of the room, but in that fair time folk sought seclusion for their hours of rest or hours of woe.

To find such beds now, one cannot, outside museums, but if the style suits — and surely it must if the room be large — a well-made copy, with the caress of the carver's hand visible on his work, is a piece to make enviable its possessor. Beware of beds, says the humourist, they are dangerous, more people have died in them than in any other place. But in such beds one might well have a heart for any fate, and lie down happily to long dreams as well as brief.

To the practical and conscientious seeker after the beautiful, the Italian Renaissance is the key to much that follows not only in Italy, but in all other countries. A knowledge of the art of that time is a necessary protection against those whose profit

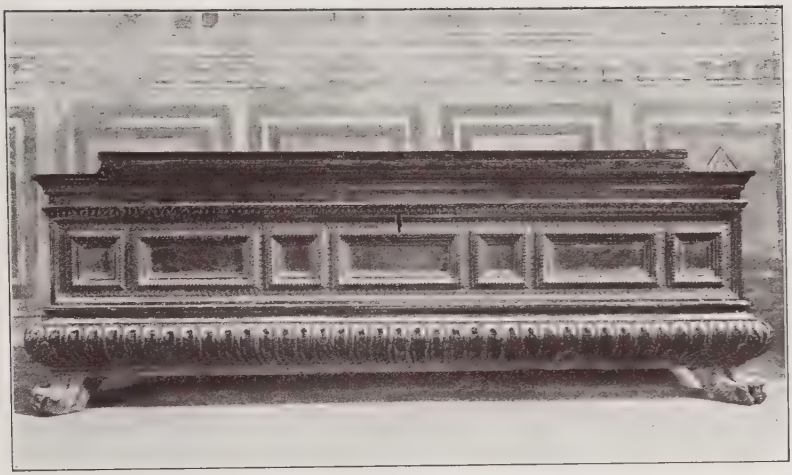


Fig. 18. CASSONE, XVI CENTURY

Fig. 19. ITALIAN INTERIOR (GOTHIC AND RENAISSANCE)

Fig. 20. A—CASSONE, XVI CENTURY (ITALIAN RENAISSANCE).
B—ITALIAN CASSONE, XV CENTURY

lies in misleading. I have in mind a young couple who brought home in triumph and ignorance from Italy, a silver placque in hammered relief by Benvenuto Cellini, for which the fledglings had paid thirty dollars on the spoken guarantee of the seller that it was genuine. The museums of Italy smile serenely at such, knowing themselves possessed of all Cellini's silver that has escaped destruction — a little fact which the young collectors had not met.

But all the joy of knowledge is not of the self-protective kind. The selection of objects to buy, more than of those to reject, brings thrills of pleasure.

A little study is the price of skill in placing design. The study need not be irksome, quite the reverse, and if called by some other name may even appear seductive. Library work, even that bloodless kind of excavating can be given a rosy charm. I have in mind a collector who went to a library to fit herself for her fascinating pastime, sought the art department and stood before its chief who naturally enquired her desire. "I am on a search for the beautiful," was the reply, which the librarian was skilful enough to meet in the same spirit; and the necessary researches were transformed into a delight merely by the attitude of mind.

Long hours in reference libraries may not be necessary for the intelligent purchase of a silver

spoon or an antique carving, but I would dwell always on the delight of the knowledge which enables one to be independent in the matter of diagnosis — to use a doctor's word. And this knowledge must be gained in part by a little dip into the most romantic parts of history, by a study of detailed drawings — it is by their details you shall know them — and most delectable of all, by being brought face to face with the real objects.

Unhappily these last are few. Comparative anatomy — to use another medical term — may best be followed by means of our friends, the books who point the way in text and drawing. The dealer in antiques is usually ready to instruct, but as a rule he knows many things wrong, or will pervert the truth for his own end, which is always and ever a matter of making a living — a most praiseworthy end, but one which interests the collector far less than the truth about a reputed della Robbia, for example.

It were unjust to the many enthusiasts who have helped and delighted me, to leave this subject without adding a tribute to the dealer in antiques. I have in mind several who are so charmed with their business, that all mercenary motives are forgotten at the least sign of encouragement, and they will enter with fine enthusiasm upon the field of art, history and romance, as exemplified by the objects around them.

The shop becomes then its owner's private collec-

tion, each object in it speaking his taste and his heart, the walls enclosing an atmosphere rich with the stories of the ages. From one gem to another this rare salesman will turn, dilating on its beauty, pointing out its distinguishing marks, passing a loving hand tenderly over its surface that the sense of touch may have its feast as well as the sight, telling, too, the thrilling story of the finding and securing of the piece. For such tradesmen as these let the seeker after the beautiful be truly grateful, for their price is far above commerce. They are of no one country, but may be found in all, in Italy as well as in America.

Now that I think of it perhaps he whom we are apt to look upon as the rapacious Italian is the most altruistic educator of them all, and will give you of his artistic temperament until the tears rush to his inspired eyes, though he knows you only for an idler and not a buyer. Under the shadow of St. Mark's in Venice is a blond keeper of a shop of rare fascination, who goes so far as to say — and he proves it too — that he prefers the customers (if such they can be called) who do not buy, for to them he may talk without embarrassment of the beauties of his wares, he may show them his rarest laces hidden since the doges' time, his wondrous pietra dura and crystals, his bits of an altar piece which are decidedly of the early Renaissance, although the great Siennese and Umbrians may never

have seen them. He may expatiate intelligently, rapturously, on all these things to the limit of your time and his, and not once bring on himself the hateful and degrading suspicion that he has a motive other than to commune with a kindred spirit. This is why he likes those who do not buy.

Let this digression from the topic be taken as characteristic of the happy erratic manner of the collector, for the pursuit is delightfully far from being an exact science. The study of styles, however, must be imbued with the spirit of conscientiousness, for familiarity with detail is the first necessity. Three chairs may be placed before you as appropriate models for your dining-room. All are made of richly time-stained wood, all are carved, all are built on the same lines of construction. They are all of the Renaissance; how distinguish the Italian from the English and the Flemish? There is the place for skill, — the skill that comes from a careful noting of detail. Once this skill is acquired there is no need to take to heart what any callow clerk or mistaken proprietor may assert, for you have the divining rod always with you.

The detail, the hall-marks of the Italian Renaissance, where shall we find them? The wonderful works of the Cinque Cento (that sweet phrase is more like honey on the lips than is our fifteenth century), their inspiration was the Greek, and the Roman as refined by Greek. This fact must lie like

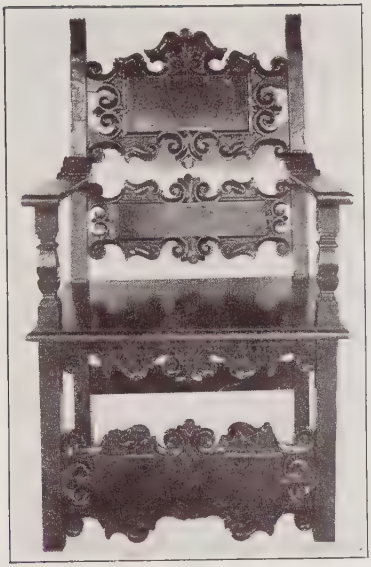


Fig. 21. CHAIRS, ITALIAN RENAISSANCE

Fig. 22. SEATS, ITALIAN RENAISSANCE

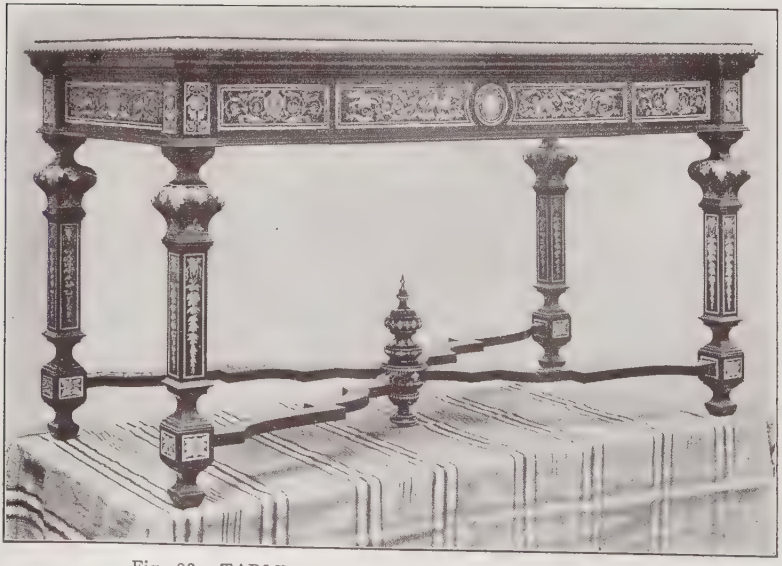


Fig. 23. TABLE IN INTARSIATA, XVII CENTURY

a foundation down at the bottom of all our investigation if we are to read unerringly.

The wonderful gift called temperament was then thrown into the work, and it altered, adapted, and evolved the designs surpassing all others in tenderness of feeling. The classic Greek was as Galatea before the ardent soul of Pygmalion breathed into the marble the tenderness of human passions. In the revival the chasteness remains an appreciable quality, but added to it are the possibilities of pleasure, of an abandon of joy, of a riot of happy fantasies.

To be entirely practical, let us examine intelligently the bed on the plate, which has wandered from its moorings, so to speak, and is a captive in the Louvre. It is Italian of the Renaissance. But how give the reason for this announcement, not to a challenging outsider but to the other half of your own mind, which is more thorough perhaps than the enthusiastic half which has leapt out and made a decision through instinct.

The most striking feature is the corner posts. The manner of their construction illustrates as well as anything could the happy play of Italian temperament on classic motif. The fluted column is the same as has delighted the eye of man for a sufficient time, to say loosely, thousands of years. Coming lower, what do we find in place of the usual base, but a dignified, elegant combination of curve and line,

rich and consistent, yet a baffler to the puzzling query in the game of twenty questions concerning which kingdom claims it, animal, vegetable, or mineral, — all three being represented. A ponderous lion's foot stands firmly on the floor, convincing in its strength and its ability to support the superimposed weight. It is the foot of the king of beasts that has served for the Egyptian, the Roman, and the Greek, and will serve as long as man makes furniture. The workers of the Cinque Cento knew its decorative value and its practicality, with also an eye to man's love of subduing to his own uses the powers that defy him, and from the antique they drew forth the lion's paw.

As if to show still further the domestication of the animal furthest removed from gentle intent, the artist enwraps the leg in the affectionate curves of an acanthus fresh from the garden. To build the column still higher, a Roman vase rests on a simple rounded standard, this in turn giving reasonable excuse if one were needed, for an upturned acanthus which holds to its heart the fluted shaft.

Note, too, the form of the bowl, for its bulging sides are favourites with designers of the times. Many services can this vase perform, as a finial, as a section in a column, or as a base. In the wondrous brocades of the time it plays a happy part as the starting-point for the fabulous vines which hang full of such flower and fruit as never was on sea or land.

Its peculiarities are few but marked, and are unforgetable, so it serves well as a part of one's stock of test-stones on design.

The building up of this column is full of the spirit of the time, the infusion of fresh hot blood from a riotously beating heart into the time-cold models of a past artistic perfection.

Even the thin flat leaves of the acanthus gain in richness under the handling of those ardent artists. Seen in a garden the plant seems not one to inspire. To those who know it only in its Renaissance interpretation, the first sight of the real acanthus is an actual disappointment, as its limp leaves, far too large in spread for their nerveless frame to support crisply, surround its tall stalk. One wonders how from this model grows the rich and sparkling foliage of the Renaissance. Yet in the hands of the artist we see this leaf gain in strength, in richness, and in grace, adapted to any surface or any decorative emergency.

On this one bed its value is amply illustrated, or, rather, the skill of the designer in adapting it. No other form could play so many parts to the perfection point. By its generous sweep, concealing and revealing, it covers the lion's leg to avoid all shock of passing too quickly from the beastie to the vase that rests above, and so carefully is this studied that this natural incongruity conveys only the idea of harmony, just as skilfully as the White Rabbit covered up the

point of difference between Alice's real and her Wonderland.

Then above, the same matter is accomplished in a different way. A Corinthian shaft resting on a vase not being usual, the acanthus brings its fairy cloak and enwraps the upright, gayly assuming it to be a flower-stalk. The capital again employs the leaf in the way sanctioned by the Romans, but questioned by the erudite, who claim that capitals and columns should be united by logic as well as harmony, and that no reason is shown in the shortened leaves that grow from nothing. However correct the critic may be, the eye loves the arrangement, and so the Renaissance used it and so it endures. On the headboard is still another use of acanthus, where the surfaces of curves were too severe to accord with the other parts of the bed. The leaf is narrowed to fit the spaces and elongated as required, with its invariable effect of elegance and grace.

The carved panel of the tester is to be studied, that and panels of similar treatment elsewhere, as being essentially a product of the prolific time which has our attention. On the plain background one is made to feel the tool of the worker. The little unfinished marks have *en masse* a decorative value of their own which is felt even if not analysed. On this is trained the airily poetic design as dainty and as elusive in spirit as a girl in life's joyous springtime. Primarily a space is to be filled, — a space of arbitrary

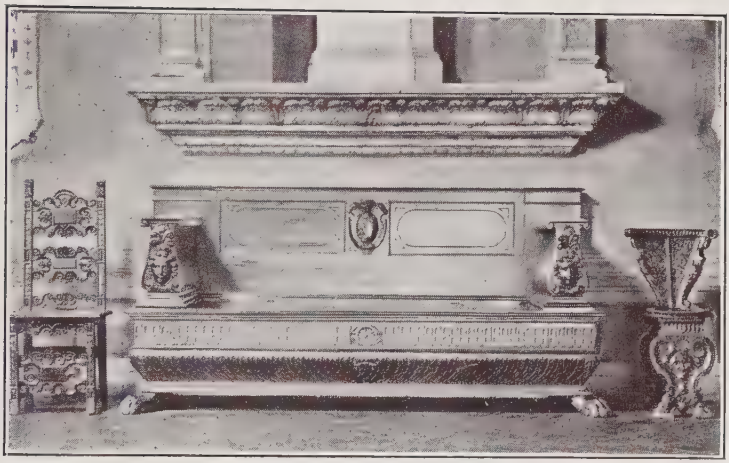


Fig. 24. FURNITURE, ITALIAN RENAISSANCE

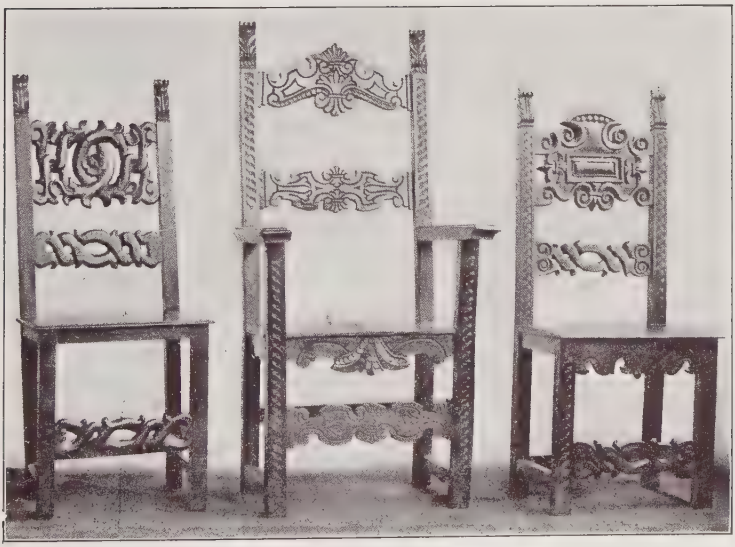


Fig. 25. ITALIAN CHAIRS XVII CENTURY

Fig. 26. CASSONE. XVI CENTURY

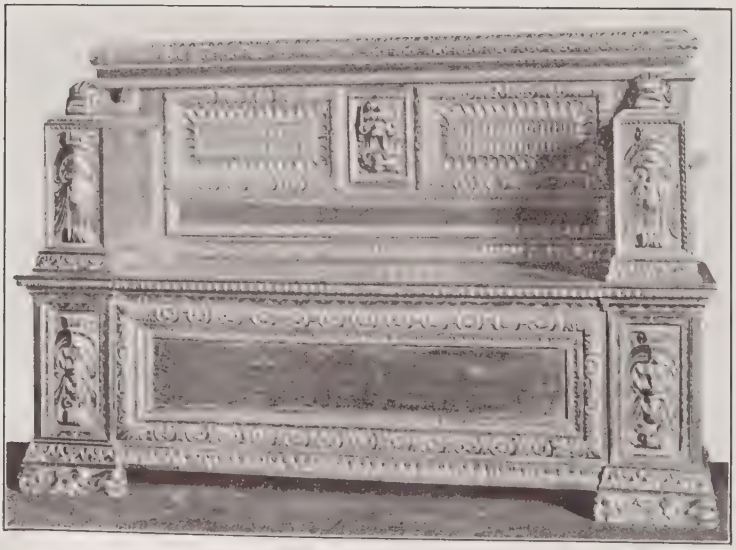


Fig. 27. CARVED SEAT, ITALIAN RENAISSANCE

dimensions. As these cannot be altered the drawing must adapt itself; and this it does with such sweet grace, such lightsome meanderings as to convey the idea that the cornice is a mere subservient frame instead of a limitation. The delicate vine is held by the claws of a central wide-winged bird, and strays finely in sweeping curves and tender foliage, turned leaves catching high-lights with an effect of sunshine in the open.

So many examples are left of this consummate skill in dealing with panels of wood or stone, that no difficulty is found in studying them. If one can travel to see the choir stalls in Perugia and in other Tuscan churches, or that wondrous casket called the church of S. Maria dei Miracoli in Venice, and a world of similar wonders, well and good. If not, then books and museums will give a fair knowledge of this characteristic treatment of the Italian Renaissance, this panel of delicate low relief where nature and art melt together to please the senses of man.

Before we leave to its shadowy occupants this magnificent bed of a luxurious time, let the eye reject detail, and in one flash take a general impression. Can the impression thus received be other than that the piece represents architecture diminished, adapted for household use? This illustrates its perfect symmetry, and is a characteristic of the time, — a time when architects were accustomed to turn from great

works to small, when Leonardo da Vinci turned from Mona Lisa to decorate a tourney.

Beds, tables, cupboards, chests were all treated more or less like miniature buildings, and so the column and pilaster played happy and symmetric part. The fronts of presses and cupboards were treated as the façade of a palace or temple, and were thus full of the meaning that proceeds from logical construction. This is to be borne in mind, for it is a fact which helps in determining the age of furniture of other lands, as we shall see later on.

It is not to be supposed that the Italians of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries could allow culture to languish lazily while the world of art was so fertile. Their intellects kept pace with the great revival, and education reached a standard which would inconvenience us of latter-day activity were we obliged to meet its requirements. To be scholarly was a requisite of both men and women. To patronise the arts liberally belonged to the position of gentlemen. And so it happened naturally that the small things which make the home luxurious expressed intellect as well as beauty. A conglomerate of meaningless lines and excrescences would not be accepted by one who knew the principles of art, and to whom symbolism was but another alphabet or, rather, a cyclopedia of history. Along with the revival of Greek and Roman drawing came a revival of those languages, for the better understanding of a past and

superior period. Even women of the time were expected to know the two great dead languages. As a natural result ancient history and mythology were at the finger ends, so to speak, and sparkled through their playful conversations and adorned their grave.

The revival of learning was the firm foundation on which the revival of art rested, for it is always true that art is dependent for long continued development on the patronage of the laity. Unless the rich man is cultivated enough to encourage art by freely spending his money for its products, the artist starves. In this fruitful time the men who led the people in politics, and the women who led them in fashion, were fitted to the work by study as well as by wealth, and were able not only to patronise artists, but to direct them in producing many of the beauties of architecture and interiors that delight us now. And that education might be popular, great universities like that at Parma with its three thousand students were founded.

And as these people were intellectual, so also were they luxurious, passionate, cruel, imaginative; they were spendthrifts as well, with themselves, their time and their money. And all these things can be traced in the work of that day, so that the temperament which guided the hand of artist workmen may be read in their works. Thus, too, was exhibited the lack of restraint that led to the debasement of the decadence.

Three types of carving all essentially characteristic, yet all different, are exemplified in three old chests among the illustrations. Chests seem to have been a part of man's equipment since the beginning of history, but each age and each country has its own particular sort. The Italian calls his cassoni, and in general we adopt the name as being a short way of announcing its nationality.

The cassone, on opposite page, illustrates a manner of treatment so chaste that Greek art must have been its inspiration. The architectural idea is adhered to until interrupted by the necessary feet. The long front is broken into a happy division of three oblongs set between four squares, then, to soften the austerity the mouldings are carved and framed in carving of a minute design, a copy of a Greek meander. Of such detail, conscientiously executed, the eye never tires, nor does a maturing taste outstrip it. The heavy base swells in a rich curve covered with another classic motive, nulling, and the corners are held in the clasp of the ever cordial acanthus. Lions' feet support this cassone and give the zealous housewife a chance to clean the dust from beneath it.

It scarcely seems as though the same age of carvers and designs would have produced two such varying methods as that employed on the cassone just examined and the next one. With all the power of its voluptuous scrolls it speaks of Rome, the city of

Fig. 28. A—PILASTERS, ITALIAN RENAISSANCE
B—CHEST OF DRAWERS, ITALIAN RENAISSANCE

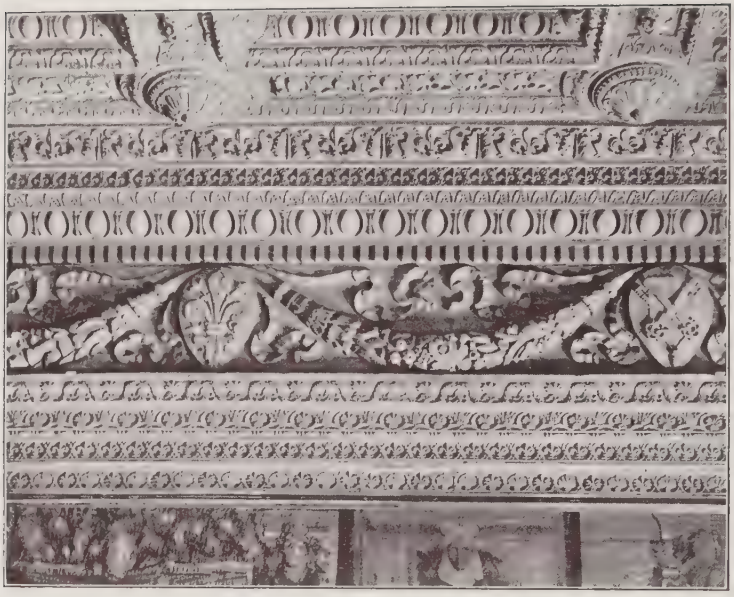


Fig. 29. FRIEZE IN PALAZZO VECCHIO, FLORENCE

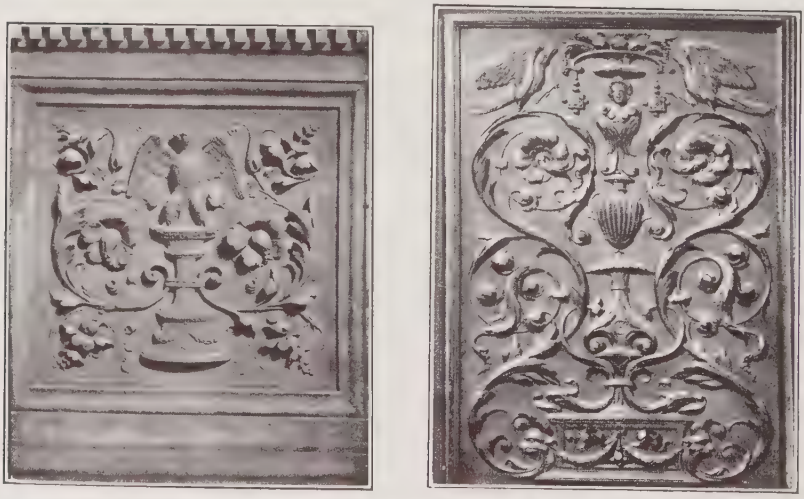


Fig. 30. RENAISSANCE CARVING (ITALIAN)

extreme luxury and a self-indulgence capable of any cruelty. The times in Italy just then were times of luxury, and the adamantine pursuit of public good which animated the ancient Roman, was a softer matter. So in this class of design we can read tolerably well the temper of those for whom it was made. Strong it is and rich with superabundant beauty, but the quality of self-restraint which is so valued by the Anglo Saxon is not here. In the hand of this designer the naturally ascetic acanthus swells into obese curves, becomes a plant heavy with rich sap and pulpy leaves, a regal, luxurious self-important factor in the world of art.

A noble house has its escutcheon in the centre of the design, but alack, it is guarded, in the midst of so much luxury, by cruel unearthly birds of prey, who certainly would discourage the attempt of any poverty-oppressed wight to ask for human pity. The cruelty of luxury, the approach of decay through over-indulgence, the unjust distribution of riches are the traits that are expressed in this wonderful relic of the Renaissance.

Very like a section of a building's façade is the front of the next cassone, with a pedestal, a cornice, and three supporting caryatides. A not uninteresting item to note is the substitution of an entire beast for a lion's foot as support from the floor. Where have we seen this creature before, is the thought which puzzles the mind. Thoughts of

Nicolo Pisano jump at once from brain pigeon-hole, and the famous pulpits of Siena, Pisa, Ravello, as well as memories of the Alhambra. No, there is something else, insists an unappeased mind. Then it is we remember the dear little impossible beasties from China, in porcelain or in bronze, which have pleased our imaginations since baby days. But that takes us back into the art of the East, which grew and flowered centuries before the classic art which inspired the Renaissance. The thought of how much sooner the Mongolian became a creature of refinement than did the Aryan is one to cause wonder; but is it altogether flattering to us? No, so let us not take it up just now, but note instead the rectangular beauty of the panelling before us, as though we stood before the cassone in the royal villa where it rests.

The classic details are familiar, of course, but once more they show themselves to be entirely satisfying. In the present instance they are needed in opposition to the strange caryatid, who is a creature of that age. She leads us into the field of the grotesques of the Italian Renaissance. The fabled mermaid is her inspiration, but it is the pretty mermaid robbed of her fascination. Mermaids have a sportive, mischievous charm that may or may not be cruel in intent; but these fantastic creatures announce their viciousness by the snakelike vitality of the hair, their utter falsity by the irregularities of the scaly terminal, and their artfulness by the concealing of

their armless shoulders with the ever accommodating acanthus drawn as demurely as ever a nice old lady protected herself by a knitted shawl.

Taking liberties with the human form divine, or leaving it off altogether and playing pranks with human heads, is a freak of imagination indulged in freely during the great revival. Perhaps it pleases you, perhaps not, but is worth your study as a character reader of the past, and as a means of identification. Others besides Italians used grotesques, and the difference in treatment is mainly the difference in the national temperament.

The idea of the grotesque was no novelty, for Gothic and Romanesque remains show us weird creatures with impossible elongations intertwining. It is the treatment that varies. Unhappily the form of woman seemed appropriate to blend with that of bird or fish or beast and was given drapery for arms and a single terminal of any tapering device. Heads were used like a button or a cartouche, or the central flower of a preposterous garland, or the curve of a sprouting scroll. And yet, notwithstanding all these absurdities, so artistically were the lines blended that the whole suggested merely a fantastic reflection of fairy-land. Taken seriously they are open to objections, but they were never meant to be taken seriously. They represent the thoughtless inconsequence of the idle hour, the lighter side of sun-warmed character. And no one can handle

these decorative forms as could the Italians of that day.

Museums are the best places in which to study old textiles, for the Italians have a deep love for the rich fabrics of their own past, and guard them with proper care. Perhaps, however, that statement is not true of some of the hirelings in museums; for one day in feasting my eyes and feeding the imagination on the glorious raiment of cardinals and doges, I spied in their case a flock of silvery moths happily nesting on a cloak of scarlet cloth. Perhaps nothing makes the glory of Venice seem so real as an hour spent in the room with chairs from which doges ruled, — canopies which made them unmindful of the heavens, and gowns of sumptuous elegance in which they walked to their magnificent duties. A twentieth-century moth of malign intent, browsing with his wriggling family upon these inspiring relics, is an impudence to make the gorge to rise. But the buttoned and braided attendant merely says, "Yes, yes, a moth," with a sweet, lazy smile; and the doge continues to sacrifice his cloak, the cardinal his cape.

Has it ever occurred to any one to find the virtue of a moth? It is in his distaste for silk. Thanks to his fastidious appetite, and the fact that the work of his kinsman, the silk-worm, turns his stomach, we have left fine examples of Renaissance design in velvet and brocade. These are rare outside museums, but they can be found, and when found

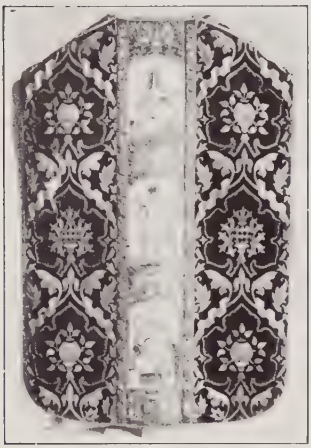


Fig. 31. A—OLD ITALIAN EMBROIDERIES
B—EMBROIDERED VESTMENT
C—ITALIAN TAPESTRY WITH GROTESQUES

Fig. 32. RENAISSANCE CARVING, CHOIR STALLS, PERUGIA

give exquisite sensations to the impressionable eye. That the designers of those times were masters we need no convincing. What manner of colourists they were is shown in brocaded silks and velvets, and also what manner of craftsmen were the workers. Such textiles have never been produced since, for the very souls of all concerned in the production seemed to be in the work. The fancy ran riot in gay foliage, in strange fruit that the palate fain would taste, in space-filling flowers that mere earth and sun could never cause to blow.

And all intermixed with these was the over-civilised bird of the Renaissance, which by his omnipresence showed his love for man and his works. He is found perching in well-matched pairs on floral sprays that branch from silken pots, or accommodatingly curving himself to fit any empty space, or again arranged as for a spit in order to fill a circle. He seems to pipe and trill, a little learnedly, it is true, all through the Renaissance in silk and wood and stone, and his song is ever on the beauty of line and curve. He deserves a chapter all to himself, and should have it but for the same matter that sometimes oppresses him on a panel — a lack of space.

In rooms where a happy hodge-podge of harmonious objects prevails instead of a strict adherence to one thought, a length of old stuff or embroidery helps wondrously with the walls in giving an

effect of warmth and elegance. Let, therefore, the man who has such to sell, show you his wares even down to the very bottom of his pile of time-touched fabrics. But buy quickly, for a new factor is at work, and presently the market will be flooded with imitations. Let the man show you his embroideries — those of the museums you will scarcely find, for they are of too old a time. They are mostly of two varieties, those of stuffed gold-thread work covering all the surface except some small pictorial effect framed by them; else they are of an impossibly fine satin stitch, the embroidery used in place of paint or brush.

Easily obtainable are embroideries of the time-honoured flame motive which has no nationality, but which abounds in Italy. It is not the fresh, recently embroidered pieces of the "rag market" in Rome, but the delightfully toned and faded ones that give true joy to that fastidious despot, the trained eye. The loom of Assisi, which produces by machinery this honoured motive, may surround itself with the poetic atmosphere of legend; but it can scarcely produce a satisfying result, or anything more than a flagrant imitation which even the tyro must know as such. Old vestments which have been discarded by the church are offered without number; and among them are many choice bits of stuff and of embroidery, although it is doubtful if these are of any great antiquity except where, as sometimes hap-

pens, some church has consented to part with some of the " treasure " that is guarded in the vestry, and these are offered for sale. Chasubles are found rich with such inspired embroidery as only sisters of the church would have time and patience to execute. Appliqué and massing of chain-stitch on a velvet ground makes an effect that was surely the inspiration of the looms which wove the brocades of the Renaissance.

The old stuffs that will tempt you are many, but the one which you will never even struggle to resist is that with a background stiff with the richness of gold or silver thread. On this soft glister are thrown pomegranates, bloom and fruit, strange roses, hibiscus, and the whole charming flora of wonderland, — all in melting shades of mauve and green, and all time's soft palette. The metal shines like a halo around each group with the light that beats on thrones, and the mind gallops off to pageants and tourneys where such stuffs played a part.

And well it may, for we hear much of their uses in the Cinque Cento. In Julia Cartwright's book on Beatrice d'Este and her times, which were just before the beginning of the sixteenth century, we read of stewards clad in silver brocade, a couch hung in mulberry color and gold, and a baby of the house of Sforza sleeping under pale blue silk and gold canopy, with a coverlid of cloth of gold. " The Duchess of Bari had a lovely vest of gold brocade,

Duchess Isabelle wore gold brocade and green velvet, Madonna Anna's *camora* was of cloth of gold with crimson sleeves." And these were the materials worn at a christening at the time when Columbus left such splendours to sail to the savage new continent.

Cloth of gold was considered a sufficient and appropriate prize for the winner of a tourney, and a great lady was pleased to receive it as a present from her ducal son-in-law. Perhaps the original brightness of these metallic fabrics would be less pleasing to us than is the soft radiance with which they now cause the eye to glow. However that may be, if a good piece reasonably free from defects is offered take it lest you regret.

The velvets of those days, — inviting softness which compels the hand, sweet with straying lines or massed designs, — they are a wonder and delight. Since those days when the crafts were respected as tributaries to the great river of art none such have been made, although it must be noted that just now the looms are again set up after the olden manner. If the Italian of to-day is jealous of his own Renaissance, at least he is not refusing to copy where he cannot create. If velvet of that time reached absolute perfection, better far to reproduce than to flood the world with the ephemeral stuff of quick production.

In Rome, in Venice, and perhaps otherwheres,

Fig. 33. FURNITURE, ITALIAN RENAISSANCE

Fig. 34. A GROUP OF ITALIAN ANTIQUES

men who are wise in the artistic tricks of the past are copying conscientiously the old fabrics which are of such value in beautifying the modern interior. Even plain velvet of other days had a quality of richness which modern velvet missed, and to produce the lost loveliness an effort is being made which is fairly successful.

There is a hard practicability, a self-satisfied rigidity about the usual velvet of commerce. It stands alone, — a grandmother's test of quality, — and to the eye shows deep shadows; but the response to the hand is harsh repulsion. But the velvet of the Renaissance! On that the eyes of its lover may gaze with rapture at its colour, — a ruby hid in morning mist, a sapphire hazy with dew; and then when fatigue presses, the face may be turned to its heavy pile, and sink into it as into woodland moss.

This velvet is made now; the looms are after the old fashion, worked entirely by hand, and each thread is carefully tended by the woman who throws the shuttle, lest a microscopic fault occur. Besides plain velvet is woven the marvellous brocades, with figures worked out in satin and in uncut velvet. All the old colours are copied, — those numberless shades, — and yet, for all their faithfulness in reproducing, the weavers cannot complete the work until Time has done the finishing.

And so, although we may hang the walls of our rooms with velvet like that used by the Medici, we

value most the time-softened length of brocade which actually existed at that time.

One result of giving to the world with liberal hand these cleverly made reproductions of fabrics is a little distressing to contemplate. Will not the dealer in old stuffs soon be selling us the product of these just-built looms of ancient patterns? Not, of course, fresh from the hands of the worker, but soiled a bit with the dust of cities, and adroitly faded by the ardent caress of the Italian sun. A word to the wise collector suffices.

It was during the Renaissance that the rulers of the Italian States started tapestry factories. These benign dukes who fathered the arts were possibly ambitious of equalling Arras in fame, the place which gave its name to tapestries in Shakespeare's day and country. Flanders was before Italy in the matter of tapestry, as was but natural. When castle walls were as rugged inside as out, they must have given but cold comfort to the shivering northerner who invented a decorative hanging to please his eye and warm his body. So the early workmen came from Flanders; but Italy, with art feeling dripping from her finger-tips, held the brush that painted the designs. Raphael himself drew cartoons for this work.

Intarsia or inlay must have a word. The Italians carried it to a perfection that has since been an inspiration to all countries. In the second half of the six-

teenth century it came into vogue, and to it is sometimes given the name of certosan work, from the fact that it was a specialty of the brothers in the Certosan monasteries. Ivory laid in ebony, delicately engraved and carved and mounted with statuettes made attractive the earliest work. This had undoubtedly its inspiration from the East. From this intarsia grew the later fashion of wood inlay in floral patterns, picked out with ivory and pearl, and lined with metal threads.

It is easy to see how this theme is taken up by France in her wood inlay of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and by Holland in her marquetry, and played on by each country, according to its gifts.

The gay little dolphin which sportively flips into Italian designs of the Renaissance plays enough decorative pranks to have a chapter all to itself. Back to the ancients turned the Italians for their artistic inspiration, and there they found the fish that flashes in the Mediterranean held in so great esteem that it was honoured as the favourite of Apollo. That was enough to give it place in decoration, and its pliable, tapering form supplied the adaptability beloved by designers.

It will at command stand on its head, singly or in pairs, and will thus curve against an upright or intertwist with its companion. Or it will lie horizontally in graceful curves, nor refuse to support

anything from a stone seat to a tripod. In grotesques it is invaluable, is willing to be a dainty creature of sparkling scales or a distorted monster, filling almost as many places as its rival, the acanthus. As a proof of its scope, Theobaldus Manutius twined it around an anchor for the sign in his wondrous book shop, and a province of France was named, for it, Dauphiné, the heir apparent to the French throne thus getting his title of dauphin. It is so much used in modern hybrid Italian work that its presence is not a guarantee of age, alas, but often plays the part of a label purposely misplaced. Yet it cannot be on this account neglected by the chronicler.

To tell of all the riches of Italian design is impossible. After all, it is the eye which is to be educated, and a study of the plates, which have been carefully selected, will give an easy acquaintance with most of the decorative features of the Renaissance as it affects domestic furnishing.

IN FRANCE

In a decorative way, the time of the French Renaissance extends from Louis XII to Louis XIII, including the styles known arbitrarily as François Premier and Henri Deux.

When Italy, with her five successful States, held the palm for art, for intellectual development, for

self-indulgence too, the rest of Europe looked on and envied, after the manner of man since Cain's day. And envy begat quarrels and later invasions and captures, — all made easier by Italy's division into duchy, republic, and kingdom.

And the usual thing happened, — after successful invasion the conquerors gradually assimilated the art of the conquered. The student, dispassionate and scholarly, tells us that nations should be content to languish, even to disappear, in giving to "outside barbarians" their own perfection, — too altruistic a thought for any but a scholar to enjoy. But Italy was forced to it in the sixteenth century, just as was Rome in earlier times.

And so it happened that when Louis XII of France wrested the duchy of Milan from the Sforza who had patronised the arts so liberally, those arts went with him back to France, even to the matter of dress. In this connection it was Isabella d'Este, with her magnificent and varied raiment, whose modes were eagerly copied, and, her ducal residence being in Mantua, the ladies' tailors of the day sought custom as mantua-makers, the familiar name still honoured in England as well as in some parts of the United States.

The new styles of design and decoration spread over France under the ambitious care of François I, remodelling architecture, interiors and the lesser products of handicraft, uniting at first with the old

French Gothic, then with freer hand, wholly sweeping exquisite curves after the Italian manner, yet with the difference that never fails to interest, — the difference that comes from national character.

Previous to François I we need not investigate, for relics of the kind we are considering are so few as to be unattainable even for copying.

François I enjoys the hatred of many chroniclers. Under the ruling of the modern fashion of accepting nothing by legend, but of robbing thrones of their romance, he has lost much in magnificence of character. Indeed, in that regard he seems to have diminished into a schoolgirl's hero of debonair manner and rakish ways, one who underneath his exaggerated courtesy and flippancy was but vacillating and self-indulgent. But for our purpose it matters not that he wore a silly smile, and a cap on one side of his head, or that he promised falsely to get himself out of a Spanish prison. We are enormously grateful to him for his most liberal adoption of the art which he imported and fostered, and which, grafted onto the French stock, bore sumptuous and satisfying fruit.

Perhaps on account of it he took to himself easy airs of self-satisfaction, but who might not who accomplished such obviously charming results. Before him France had been a bitter place to live in, where nobility huddled in bare, massive, feudal castles, and the peasants were brutalised by pov-

Fig. 35. CHAIRS. A—FRANCOIS I. B—LOUIS XIII

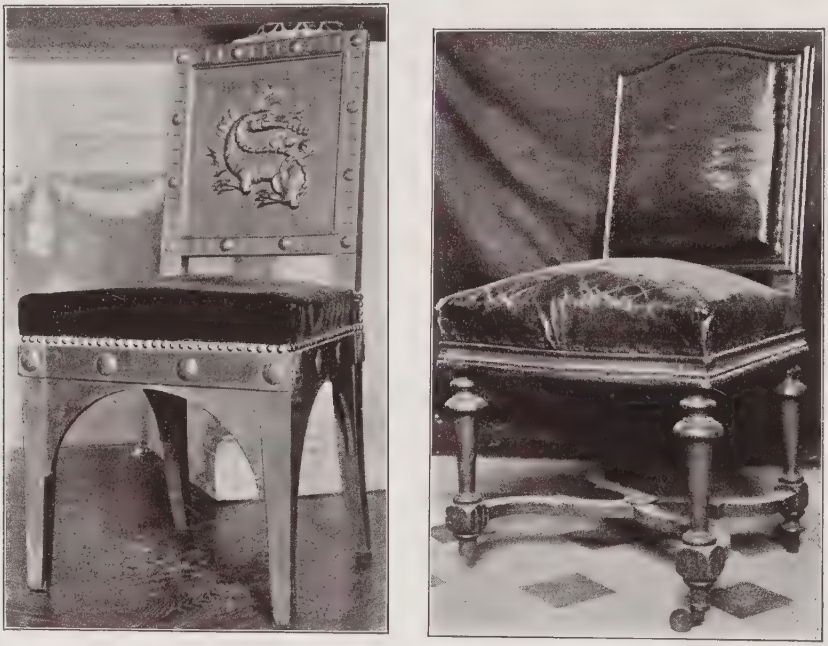


Fig. 36. A—CHAIR, FRANCOIS I
B—CHAIR, LOUIS XIII

erty and oppression. To François it was given to deck life more luxuriously, to live it more graciously, and as he saw the improvements grow apace under his fostering eye, we must not throw sly hints of the over-prevalence of the salamander, of the ubiquity of the symbolic little beast vivaciously posing among the flames, and whose other name was François I.

The Italians were called upon by France to set the note in things artistic, and must have done so amicably notwithstanding the bellicose relations of the powers, for artists of note established themselves as masters to train the French hand and alter the French ideals. Being so far ahead in development, and in intellectual progress and, alas, in self-indulgence, they had much to teach their foreign pupils.

Guilio Romano, Raphael's brilliant pupil, left his work to help establish the Italian school in France, and Le Primatice also. It was under the latter that Fontainebleau was built, and Chambord, and the gentle Azay-le-Rideau courting affectionate regard among the flowers of the riverside in Touraine.

Of native designs there were many, and these were not without honour in their own country. Salaman de Brosse came along a little later, making his mark with grace and permanency, and after him, when Louis XIII was throned, a whole horde of famous men grew and prospered, and were favoured of royalty, for now was the time when gentler arts

than those of murder on the field and "on the straw" occupied the attention. The soldier was obliged to share his honours with another claimant, the man who made of life not a contest but a luxury, and the only prominent names are, therefore, not those of warriors. It was the time of the astute Richelieu, inhabitant of the Palais Royal, the time when the Luxembourg was built, when talent was developed by Jacques Lemercier, Nicolas Poussin, and Claude Lorraine.

If we seek the reason of the introduction of the Renaissance into France, it is found in history, and it rests on the predatory instinct of man, and if we would know the reason for its specific development, that, too, is found in history, but of a more restricted district, in the lives of individuals. Strangely enough, religion plays a large part in it, and the reason is logical, as the progress or decay of art always seems to be. The Renaissance meant, to the North more than to the South, an awakening of religion. The Italians, in turning to antiquity for artistic inspiration after the formalism of Christian art, were not content to take mere beauty, but with it joyously cast off the sad and sanguinary tenets of the Christian faith, and embraced with ardour the happy horde of deities whose physical perfection parades eternally through art, telling man that life is a perfect and a joyous thing. Christianity as monasticism had taught it, ascetic, self-flagellant,

regarding life as discipline, was thrown off by a certain cultivated class, as a released schoolboy throws away his books. A line of new gods came into fashion, and it became the mode to worship Venus, Jove, and all the self-indulgent cohort, for by so doing the devotee indulged himself. In other words, moral laxity accompanied the Italian Renaissance, even to the heads of the church. That it produced its ultimate decay is only an ever-repeated law of nature.

It is odd to think of Martin Luther as a factor in the direction of art. But if he had not made his famed visit to Rome during the time when the popes were saturated by the immorality of the hour, an immorality which art had indirectly brought about, the character of the Northern art would have been different. It is this in a nutshell, the Reformation marched hand in hand with the Renaissance, and, being a moral movement, a protest against corruption of all sorts, it had its chastening effect on the art of the times. If an Italian parallel period is sought it might be found, but not later than the time when Giotto and his followers knew no other inspiration than Christianity, the time when demure stiff little madonnas and saints expressed religion and art.

Later on came the laxity and decay, the over-ornamentation that bespeaks the lessening of vigor, but that we have not to consider. We are no further on

than the time when kings and princes were ceasing to build strongholds, domestic forts, to live in, and were erecting, and decorating, and furnishing the first real palaces, which were homes and not armories. The chateaux of Touraine show this change in all its beauty.

But these affairs of architecture are too large a matter for this little book, which should keep within its province, the study of those smaller affairs which are added after the architect has finished. Yet those who neglect to make their own the origin and the reason for the styles of architecture, miss half the pleasure of the study of old furnishings, for the connection between the two is very close. In its last analysis it is the study of man, which as Pope says, is mankind's most interesting research.

Perhaps it is a handicap in these early styles not to have a knowledge of their architectural details, for these extended within doors after the same manner, only in miniature. As evidence of this, there are the framed chimney pieces in the Chateau of Blois, in the wing of François I, than which nothing more exquisite could be produced. The style is far from being Italian, yet is well away from the Gothic, and illustrates the individuality of the French hand despite its Italian training.

Of furniture in general it may be said that it is reassuringly solid, and is generous in proportion.

Chairs are evidently made for long deliberate conversations, and not to perch on for one of a dozen five-minute calls. "How shall I know the difference between French, and English, and Flemish chairs?" asked a perplexed buyer of a collector; he laughed, stroked the wood and tapestry of his oldest French piece, and said ambiguously, "You must know the difference."

Without associating with original pieces, perhaps it is impossible to know this difference. Indeed, I feel myself embarrassed to set it down on paper. The atmosphere of antiquity which is its charm is impossible to describe — it must be felt. By reading you may know its history, by studying you may know its detail, but only by contact you feel its full charm.

The old chair was made by men who studied the rules of proportion as religiously as they learned the catechism, and who prepared for this by steeping their minds in the five orders of architecture. Each chair was turned out complete by one worker, often by him who designed it. Therein lies the reason for the perfection of the old. A piece of furniture was a composition, the expression of a man's own taste and erudition.

When we look upon a squat simple chair of the early French work, without carving, other than a twist, it is not easy to know just why it has character, just why it has atmosphere. But the secret is found

in the subtle matter of proportion. After that, and supplementary to it, is the mellowness gained by the touch of countless human hands. And this is impossible for the most cunning art to reproduce. Models may be copied, line for line (although unfortunately they rarely are), and artificial worm-holes may be bored into the wood to simulate the ravages of time, but no quick process can ever reproduce the effect given by long association with man as he lives his daily life.

That this atmosphere peculiarly appertains to the old is known to the initiated. Said a lady, "I want to buy a chair of the French Renaissance and to have it copied to make a set for a dining-room." "You cannot do it, madame," was the reiterated and unalterable reply of the dealer who loved his goods. And he was right. The old chair is eloquent, the new is mute for very shame.

Oak was used for the earliest chairs, and walnut after, both strong and submitting to the carver's tools — the latter the best, of course, with its finer grain. In general the seats were large, the backs low, except in armchairs, but always with a suggestion of ease. Legs were invariably straight in construction, although often elaborately turned, and usually were under-framed. The styles of this under-framing depended upon the chair, the simpler ones having scroll curves, the chair of spirals employing the same. Squareness of construction was adhered

to, which gave a look of solidity without in any way injuring an effect of lightness.

The earliest chairs knew but one form of upholstery, the simple expedient of thin cushions tied to seat and back. These softened the asperities of wooden seats and cane, and made comfort possible to a weary spine. By the time of Louis XIII upholstery was an established science, but even before that it was used. This brought in the use of tapestry as a covering and the wondrous Genoese velvets which flourish so magnificently their plumy foliage. Leather, too, supplied the back and seat of many a chair, often forming the seat alone, without a softening spring below it.

Among the early French developments we find the chair which is known in England as the Shakespeare chair. Proud it should be to bear the name, however inappropriately. France and Flanders, besides England, produced this chair, each marking it with its peculiarity of detail, yet retaining by one accord the narrow back which forms a panel in the sweep of a wide semicircle.

A chair of much dignity and moral rectitude is that which was entirely rectangular, with two sets of under-framing on the legs, and the back extended a little above the square of leather which supported the sitter. Large brass nails take the place of carving with excellent though threatening decorative effect. The legs were turned, round surfaces alter-

nating with blocks, to give secure places for the under-framing, and the noticeable feature of proportion was the unusual height of the seat from the floor. This has been explained by the lack of luxurious floor-coverings in those days. We can well fancy that with a cold draught sweeping the half-covered floor of an ill-heated room, that many a pretty maid has drawn her dainty ankles snugly under petticoats and rested them on the convenient oaken rungs.

The two chairs of François I with twisted shafts, shown in the illustration, give an idea of French expression of Italian taste. They show a delightful self-restraint, the refinement of culture, telling more by their purity of line than is expressed in that similar style of this period which is elaborately ornate. This latter style is common to several countries, but the French handled it with less grace than might have been expected.

The drawings given are interesting, as showing the early departure from the straight line in legs, and the uprights in arms. Wood-workers were developing the art of curving supports without a sacrifice of strength. It was an art that marks some most important styles later on, so it is a pleasure to find it at its early source and to follow it through its development. What it became later bears slight resemblance to this early work, and in some ways this is the best. When the line of direction falls outside the line of base, or when there is no balance in a sup-

porting upright, the principle of reason has been violated, even though the eye has been soothed into approval.

Luxuriousness played but little part in the chairs of the early French Renaissance, but before long the upholstered armchair of generous proportion made its appearance, and has never since been banished from the home of man. Nor has a more comfortable chair been invented for half ceremony, for on it one neither lights impatient to be off, nor lounges in fine company. It is in short the happy compromise between the side chair and the downy haven of the "sleepy hollow," which modern invention has made wherewith to soften the asperities of a world too hard.

The scroll leg is noticeable here, though far from invariable, and the curving arm. Modestly the acanthus leaf curls its many-pointed tongue around the terminals, encouraged perhaps by the Italian under-framing which we shall meet in the furniture of all the nations on which shone the life-imparting sun of the Renaissance.

Cabinets of this period were, as might have been expected, the reflection of Italian methods, but more than that, they were the forerunners of styles familiar to us in English and American work of the eighteenth century. We have long passed the time when a chest was the only receptacle for the accessories of nice living, but many of these early cabinets were but

chests grown large and supported on a multiplicity of legs. They developed doors and drawers, and by grace of proportion and decoration were elegant and imposing. Some were crude and heavy, as though the worker's brain and hand were slow to leave brutal methods, but in the most beautiful examples the Italian feeling in its ultimate refinement is portrayed.

Examples of this work are rare, museum pieces they might be called, but a cursory study of them brings delight to the collector even though, like the boy before the bakeshop window, he may look and long, but may not touch. The make-up of these pieces is what might be called architectural, for they follow in composition the façade of temples in the time of the High Renaissance. Columns are used in as many designs as that prolific time produced, and the two divisions of the cabinet displayed each a different kind — in this regard following the architectural rule of a solid column at the base and a more ornate type above. A pediment, usually broken, finished the top, roof-like.

The influences that make a style being the clue to its true interpretation, it is impossible not to dwell still further on them. These influences are not only the large affairs of history where a game of chess is played with countries as chessmen, but they find their source in the lives of individuals — and thereby hang tales of undying interest. Reducing the matter

to individuals gives its interest a vitality not possible otherwise.

It was the great Sforza, Il Moro, whose perfect taste led him to put Leonardo da Vinci in charge of the exquisite monuments of art in Northern Italy, and it was Charles VIII of France, with whom he had dealings — amicable ones at first. Charles and his indomitable little Anne of Brittany were personally interested in the luxuries and beauties of the court of the Duchy of Milan, and as anxious to adopt these tempting and satisfying novelties into their own surroundings as the rest of the world has been to adopt the decorative things of France.

Charles VIII held the kingdom of Naples for two years at the close of the fifteenth century, and returning brought with him enough to gratify this craving for the new developments in art. Domenico de Cortona returned with him into the country which was uncomfortably feudal in its domestic garnishings, also Bernadino de Brescia, and others. So it is not hard to see how the Renaissance came in.

Then François I, with his eye and his senses ever keen to discover the beauties and ameliorations of life, imported Andrea del Sarto, and the great Leonardo, to set the true note artistically. It must be remembered in this connection that the latter was not artist alone, but architect and engineer, a master in music and literature, besides being one of the most aristocratic of gentlemen. He

was called on to beautify Fontainebleau's interior, and later taking up his residence at Amboise, staid in France until his death.

The next monarch, Henry II, married the Italian Catherine de Medici, who most naturally brought with her the decorative products of her country, and held to the Italian school that François had founded through Giulio Romano. The revival of Greek mythology which accompanied the revival of the art that flourished when such inadequate religion was taken seriously, pleased the fancy of the king's favorite, Diane de Poitiers, who, therefore, gave her powerful favour to the Renaissance. It was a pretty conceit to work upon, that because of her name she was in truth the goddess of the hunt, and to flatter her vanity, artists exerted themselves to be classic in design appropriate to the luxury of La Chasseresse.

Forty years later, under Henry IV, things had changed a bit, had got away from the two principle beauties of the Renaissance, the graft of Italian on Gothic, and the pure Italian. This time marks a sort of decadence, a period of meaningless ornamentation which entirely lacks the intellectual quality of earlier work. Logic and consistency were buried under superfluous design. The influence of Italy was still present with a Medicean queen on the throne. It was Marie who persuaded Rubens, after his eight years in Mantua, to come to France.

But Italy herself had passed the period of greatest purity in art.

It was under the next monarch, Louis XIII, that were begun those artistic tendencies and improvements that led up to the sumptuousness of Le Grand Monarque.

CHAPTER IV

THE STYLE OF LOUIS QUATORZE

REIGN OF LOUIS XIV – 1643–1715

AFTER studying briefly the Renaissance as it spread over Europe, putting on local colour in each district, stiffening a bit under the effect of the Reformation when that great movement was most powerful, the student of decoration reaches a trio of French decorative periods so popular that every one knows them, so charming that one is ever ready to review them.

In trying to fix in the mind the classic principles of the Renaissance in its highest expression, I have touched but lightly on its later aspect, its decadence, the time when in matters artistic unreason and immorality held high carnival over Italy and whatever country was injudicious enough to copy. It is confusing to study the bad. A thorough understanding of the good will inevitably forefend the adoption of the decadent. But because the decadence came we must record it as a historic fact. Sometimes its cloven foot is well hid, but the well-trained eye instinctively rejects it. Very often the resemblance

between good styles and bad is very close, but that only makes the latter more repulsive, as no animal repels man more than that one which most resembles him.

After the classic influence passed away there was a groping about, or rather a straining after new effects, all more or less distressing, until France produced what might be looked on in the light of a second Renaissance. I allude to the decorative periods known as Louis Quatorze, Louis Quinze, and Louis Seize.

It is impossible to disassociate any of these from the personnel of the style, but that instead of being a bore adds mightily to the interest. In considering the time of Louis XIV let us divide these actuating influences into the two classes of political and social, placing Le Grand Monarque at the head of both, as he was in truth, — although the divinity that doth hedge a king is so attenuated in these days that one is more inclined to Louis' astute ministers than to his egoist self.

However, everything was in the power of a king in those days — possibly would be still if kings had been ever wise and good — and so Louis headed the movement for the most magnificent luxury the world has seen in modern times. The remarkable thing seems that a monarch with affairs of state to manage should think this department of life worth his kingly devotion. It was probably due to the

reaction from his early training under the queen mother, when Mazarin's severe hand kept the boy king under rigid discipline. We can imagine how in boyhood he must have revolted in spirit, and planned indulgences and gratification of the love for the beautiful when he should attain power.

He had a long time to play his part, — seventy-two years, — and in which to develop a style of such magnificence that now only palaces and hotels *de luxe* can attempt to reproduce it in its perfection. Let not the caviller scoff at the linking of the two words, for modern hotels have recently become the palaces of the public, and in their furnishing and decoration reach a degree of lavishness — and sometimes perfection — rarely seen outside the homes of the unnecessarily rich. And on the style that takes the name of Louis XIV are founded so many of the pieces of furniture we find in other countries, particularly in England and our own land, that a careful study is rich in results to the collector with whom identification is a passion.

Those who cannot forget the self-indulgence of the king, his cruel extortion, his questionable political policies, and his colossal vanity, are prone to place all the glory of his reign on those who counselled him, and perhaps they are right, but this must be admitted, that had he not favoured art and literature these would not have reached such brilliant development in his reign.

While looking for reason, for cause, and effect in this pursuit of furniture styles, one must go to high sources, — in this case to so high a one as Colbert, whom Louis made Prime Minister in 1661, the king being then but a young boy of eighteen.

It was but three years later that an institution was founded which has affected decorative art for nearly two hundred and fifty years. This was the assembling of artists together under the "Royal Academy of Painting, Architecture, and Sculpture," which embraced also the makers of furniture. This classifying of furniture with the fine arts helped to make it one of them, and enlisted all the others in bringing it to perfection.

The Academy thus founded was not permitted to languish, but was stimulated with a novel and desirable prize system. Those artists who showed themselves of sufficient ability were invited to join their confrères under the roof of the Louvre, not, as now, by means of canvases skied, or cabinets misplaced, but in actual and permanent instalment of the men themselves. In other words, the State took upon itself the maintenance of industrious men of talent, and placed them beyond the annoying considerations of rent, butcher bills, etc. (inestimable boon which even the inartistic might value!), so that fertile brains and cunning hands might be devoted to art alone. If Louis XIV was ever extravagant in indulgence of *le Roi Soleil*, at least he should have

large credit for the generosity of this ideal institution, which must appeal strongly to every man trying to reconcile the artistic with the practical.

The king's signature of approval was necessary to the paper which gave the aspiring artist the prize of *un appartement au Louvre*, but Colbert was the one who usually made the selection according to the talent of the artist, for Colbert was worthily a leader. It was he who selected as fitted worthy of the honour the man who is perhaps the most interesting in the study of furniture, — Charles André Boulle.[1]

The career of this man shows the developing atmosphere of the day, the wise methods which matured talent and made a fine art of furniture-making. It shows also the high place occupied by the craftsman. That the crafts are so neglected in favour of the work of machines is one of the reasons why we cannot find in modern work the perfection which marks the old. But times have changed, and if the best pieces are not now so good, at least the average home of the country is more elegantly furnished than were the homes of the masses in France during Louis' reign.

Colbert, then, rested his wise eye on Boulle and recommended to the king that he be removed from the world of distraction and given *un appartement*

[1] The name is variously spelled Boulle, Boule, and Buhl, but I have adopted the spelling used in his day in his country.

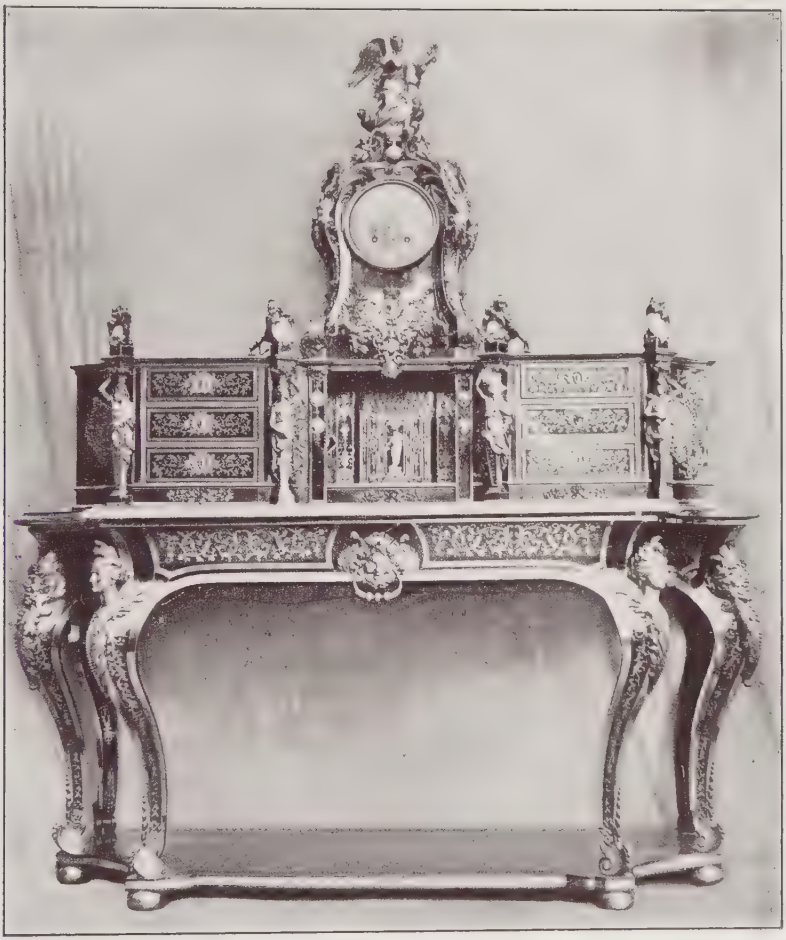


Fig. 37. BOULLE CABINET, LOUIS XIV

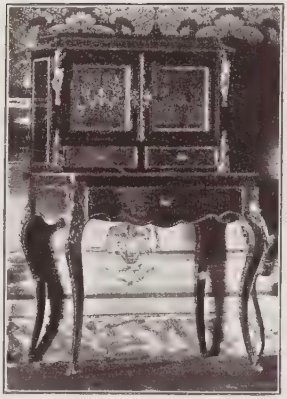


Fig. 38. A—BOULLE CABINET, LOUIS XIV
B—ARMCHAIR, LOUIS XIV
C—BOULLE CABINET KNEE-HOLE TABLE

au Louvre, where he might produce those masterpieces which would both convenience and delight the ladies of the left-hand court. We are not told that the queen was pleased; she seems not to have counted in matters decorative or pleasurable. It was recommended that Boulle receive one of the best of the apartments, which he doubtless did. He was but thirty at the time. Following the example of the Academy, he established under himself a smaller institution in his extended workshop within the palace precincts, and here he employed numbers of workmen and craftsmen.

This would be uninteresting in itself did it not illustrate the high rank accorded to furniture-making. These aids to Boulle were not mere mechanics, but were men of talent, carrying out their own ideas. It was not the custom then to draw a design and let who would execute it, for the execution was as important as the thought. Boulle's workshops, therefore, were not filled with the mere smelters, woodcutters, and the like, but with an enthusiastic band of practical artists. It is to the great Le Brun that some of the designs of Boulle cabinets are attributed.

Boulle had four sons, all men of talent, and innumerable gifted assistants, and it was under this influence that the best details of the Louis XIV styles were developed. After his death came a relaxation from the chaste and perfect outlines which,

combined with sprightly detail, form the best expression of the style we are considering.

But the special work associated with the name of Boulle is the rich and costly inlay of tortoise-shell and metal with which furniture was encrusted. It would be an injustice to the man to think of him only in connection with this species of decoration, remarkable and brilliant as it is, for inlay of a similar kind was used long before his time, and the later copies are so crude as to produce a prejudice against it. Nevertheless, the name of Boulle means to most people not the man and his ateliers, but the inlay of tortoise and metal on hard wood, such as chestnut and oak. Work that he never designed masquerades under his name, and is turned out of French factories every year, but its quality at once proclaims its falseness.

The designs for the inlay were drawn by artists whose legitimate work was painting, and were mainly in free Renaissance effects of floriated scrolls. To execute the work, sheets were glued together, two of white metal or brass, two of shell, and the pattern then sawed out. This gave what is known as Boulle and counterpart, or the pattern and the ground for inlaying. When separated they were fitted together to form decorative panels. The process is a nice one, requiring a conscientious hand.

After it is laid in place the engraver finishes the metal by lines which soften its too great brilliancy

by a gentle shading, and this is where great opportunity lies for artistic work. After the designs have been thus worked up and softened, the finishing touch of the piece of furniture is added, a most important part, — the mounts of ormolu, or gilded brass.

It seems that too much attention could not be paid to these, either in design or workmanship. The shell and metal inlay were taken as a piquant background on which to set these decorative metal pieces. In shape they conformed to the *meuble* they adorned, but so gracefully that it seemed instead the piece was shaped to their convenience.

On cabinets there were small panels, in high relief, worked out as carefully as though this bit were to stand alone. There were also satyrs, mascalons, rams' heads, exquisite women's heads sparkling with that look of vitality which we call modernity, and as a compliment to the king who never wearied of incessant adulation, there was the head from which rayed the light of the sun. The great Sun King, who had the assurance to believe that he himself represented God on earth, was ever pleased to see this symbol of his reign, and it may be regarded as one of its characteristic decorative details.

On tables all these designs were used, as well as border patterns of the classic sort, the egg and tongue, acanthus moulding, bound bay leaves, or any of the running designs which for centuries have

delighted the cultivated eye. Enough cannot be said about the perfection of workmanship on these mounts, for by this are the originals distinguished. The work expended on each piece equalled that spent on a piece of fine jewelry. The piece was first cast, then it passed into the hands of those artistic craftsmen whom Boulle directed and whom Le Brun superintended, in the great State atelier for furniture-making, which was attached to the factory of the Gobelins tapestry. These men cut, chased, polished, and worked up the design until a state of perfection was reached which approached the finest production of the goldsmith's art. And, after all, this piece was but an ornamental detail of a great whole. On one of his cabinets Boulle employed men of many crafts, and he himself was master of them all, with the wisdom of a leader. He is not spoken of by his biographers as merely an "ébéniste," but as "architecte, peintre, et sculptre en mosaique, ciseleur, et marqueteur ordinaire du roi."

How can it be possible in the hasty work of to-day to reproduce these gems of art? Alas, there are many who know no difference, like a certain lady who, looking on a piece of Boulle, said with amiable frankness that she would as lief buy one just made. For such the world is full of cheap and nasty ill-made imitations. The works of the master will always be imitated, so it must be borne in mind that all 's not Boulle that glitters.

Whether it was to please an eye of less refined taste than his own, or whether it was done in the search for new effects, Boulle introduced into his later work a vermilion colouring under the shell, which, showing through, gave high decorative value. Gold was used in the same way, but these effects came late in the period and are far from representing at its best. At this time, too, mounts became coarser and began to develop into the patterns of curled endive or celery, which, under the handling of Caffieri and Gouthière, made such an impress on the decorative style of the next monarch, Louis XV.

It is interesting to note the forms of Boulle's case work, to see how rigidly he adheres to purity of line in his cabinets; then to turn to the tables and see the inception of the curved leg, which played so extensive a part in furniture designs all over Europe and America. It is just this departure from the straight support to a curved which is the distinguishing feature of furniture in the succeeding French style, in the Netherlands, in England, and, finally, here, when the colonists were imitating the mother country.

But Boulle was thoroughly an artist, and it will be observed that he adhered to true principles when he gave to curved supports the appearance of being made of metal. Wood was never meant, on account of its grain, to be carved into the serpentine legs. The scroll leg, or rather what it became, could only

be logically executed in metal, — a fact which led the Greeks to use bronze in table legs of similar shape.

The *commode* of the time of Louis XIV shows the beginning of those styles which were characteristic of the succeeding period, — that is, it initials the *bombé* which swells its sides in portly elegance. The manner of decoration was consistent with this time of over-decoration. Furniture was veneered with rare woods, panelled in a manner simple yet effective. Four sheets of wood were taken from the same "quarter" of a tree's bole and set together to form a square. This made a natural raying of the grain from the centre, and sufficiently decorated a panel when bordered with a straight band and set with an ormolu handle. On the angle of the front was set a metal mount, a meandering fancy in the way of a lady or a satyr, with celery terminals.

We wander quite away from Boulle in considering chairs of the period, for his especial fancy played its brilliant lights about less obviously useful bits of furniture. Indeed, in chairs we seem to be studying another time altogether, — a time less intellectual, we might say, when the body's comfort was agreeably blended with the pleasure of vision. These chairs, then, were large and comfortable, upholstered, too, on back and seat, and covered either with the rich ruby velvet of the time, which was so freely enriched with gold galloon, or else with

brocade of gigantic pattern. A whole book might be written about these fantastic and varied products of the home looms and those imported from Italy. The designs were by artists desirous of bringing nature within the sumptuous over-civilised apartments of the time, for they often showed large sylvan scenes of flowering trees bending over lakes, over gardens, and over scenes where sportive youth played at love.

In general the legs of chairs were straight in intent, for although the scroll appeared, its deviations affected decoration more than form. The acanthus leaf is seen in its most vigorous treatment, not with its greatest refinement, but with strong and reassuring effect. When under-framing is done it receives generous decorative treatment, this being made possible by the adoption of the Italian method in distinction from the square under-framing of the style of Louis XIII and earlier. It is this feature that the Flemish adopted, with far-reaching results.

The use of stuffs makes the bed of this period an affair of curtains and covers more than of decorative woodwork, and makes it, therefore, less interesting to us in our hygienic times. One accustomed to the free ventilation and unhindered view of the modern bed of the "gates-of-Heaven" variety and its kindred, could look only with sanitary distrust on the bed which harboured Louis XIV at Versailles. But then, consider the uses of a bed at a time when

personages of high degree held small receptions in them, when the *"petit levée"* and the *"couchée"* were semi-public functions. Let those who will call the Sun King self-indulgent, his life must have earned our modern epithet strenuous, when he could not even go to bed without one of the most aristocratic of his court ceremoniously holding the candle in awful state during the process.

But kings aside and public *petits levées*, bed chambers were large in those days, often used for other things, and the bed was railed off in what was called an alcove; but while its occupant slept, there was no immunity from the interruption of persons of the family passing to and fro, or even sitting down for a cosy chat. What a blessing, then, the thickest of curtains, the highest of canopies, which could make at once a private chamber of this elegant but much exposed bed.

In heavy sumptuousness the decorations of Louis XIV have never been exceeded. It was a time when richness was piled on richness, when ornamentation reached a point beyond which progress would be impossible. The general scheme for rooms left nothing to be supplied after decorations were finished. And yet into these rooms against these ornate backgrounds were placed the exquisite productions of Boulle and his assistants, and a horde of others.

The general scheme for rooms was architectural.

Fluted pilasters rose at frequent but well-planned intervals to support an ornate pediment and frieze, above which curved a deep decorative cove. This treatment was suitable for palaces, but has to be much modified to suit modern needs, and then it loses its primal principles of grandeur and magnificence.

Wherever carving and high relief could be used they were employed in panels, mantels, etc. Ceilings were painted with whatever richness the owner could afford. It is not to be supposed that with the great artist Le Brun as the chief director of things artistic there would not be place made for the works of artists in this golden age of decoration. It may well be called a golden age, for wherever gilt could be laid it was unsparingly used, so that all parts of a room would be gilded except those covered with hangings or paintings. In these rooms were placed chairs and sofas with heavy carving, every part of which shone with gold. Being an age of splendour, gold seemed its appropriate expression, and suited well the massive richness.

Glass at this time was manufactured in larger sheets than had hitherto been possible, and mirrors did their work of multiplying the magnificence as well as brightening it. And larger glass made possible a new article of furniture called the vitrine, — the glass front cabinet which so accommodatingly shelters and displays the treasures committed to its care.

The ébénistes of the time took the Italian method of introducing into furniture, marble, mosaic, placques of Egyptian porphyry, lapis lazuli, and all decorative and rare imparters of colour and richness. Chinese lacquer found favour, too, brought from Holland as the enterprise of Dutch navigators had penetrated the Orient, but brought as a result of the French invasion of the Netherlands, — another little point from history which daintily calls for notice from the surface of a French screen.

Although it is not the province of this book to enter the large field of tapestry-weaving, it is impossible to disassociate from this period the free use of tapestry which characterised it. If one were inclined to quarrel with the almost barbaric splendour of the style which speaks display, all might be forgiven for the tapestries alone. A more ideal covering for a wall could never have been designed. The room where tapestries hang is a chamber of delight, a room in which company should be of the choicest. The foliage which hangs overhead is from the garden of the Hesperides, and the fruit is lusciously provocative. Lose yourself under the umbrageous shadows if you seek sweet peace, or if your mood is for company, sit among the gay beauties in the formal garden and hear how loveliness enhances wit, and how well court ladies play the parts of old divinities. Or, drag yourself back to the time in which you live, let the trees retire and carry with

them the vitality of the shadow-folk they shelter, and use your tapestry as fitting background for the living friends around you.

Louis XIV knew these qualities, knew that he could, among his tapestries, fall back into revery in their enchanted lands, or bid them *s'eloigner*, fade into backgrounds for his favourites. And Le Brun, who created their charm, to him must all credit be given. Yet Colbert must not be forgotten, for he furnished "sinews of war." In truth, the reign of the Sun King was so attended with men of talent and ability that it is hard to stop naming them.

The story of the rise of the Gobelins factory under Louis XIV is full of interest, and is typical of the time. Gilles and Jean Gobelin were two dyers who set up their little works on a stream, the water of which was especially kindly to their colours, their humble and much-ridiculed ambition being to produce a scarlet dye which they introduced from Venice.

Later they took up the manufacture of tapestry in imitation of the Flemish weavers. It was in the reign of François I that they established their works, but the humble factory was still existant at the time when Colbert was ministering so ably to Louis XIV.

It was by his advice that the king purchased the factory from the family whose name it has always retained, and from this purchase grew the grandest of decorative results. The factory was not only for

the production of tapestries, but was made appropriate to its title of Manufacture Royale des meubles de la Couronne. The director was, of course, Le Brun, the king's favourite artist, and he was counselled to employ the best that could be found of tapestry-makers, gold and silver smiths, cabinet-makers, painters, lapidaries, founders and engravers, in short, all the army of artistic craftsmen which the age produced in such perfection.

One of the tapestries of the time, one of the complicated scenic affairs that make one wonder at choosing wool and shuttle instead of paint and brush for such a work, represents the king favouring the factory with a royal visit. His majesty is being presented by the director with magnificent cabinets, tables, vases, and other moveables, besides the wonderful tapestries themselves, so lavishly displayed as to cause forgetfulness of the labour consumed in their production.

It was not Colbert's intent to form merely a tapestry factory, but to form a State school of decorative art, and it is to this school and the royal favour it received that the age owes its artistic perfection. It was here that those silver vases and small *meubles* were produced that were such wonders of expense and workmanship, and which later on were relentlessly thrown into the smelting-pot to refill empty coffers.

It is not surprising that with Le Brun and

Berain to draw designs that the tapestries produced were most magnificent, and that their fame is even greater to-day than when first made. One piece was not enough to hold the ambitious thought of the artist, so that series were made, picturing the life of Alexander, and of Constantine, and also, naturally, of the king himself and his residences. The cultivated fancy was for the revival of the antique gods and goddesses, and this brave cohort of physical perfection was thus fixed in eternal triumph of a decidedly Gallic cast. Venus, Diana, Apollo, — Louis' favourite, —with a host of bacchic attendants, made gay the scenes which were in turn to be but the background against which the living gods of the day were to hold their revel.

To those who have never entered a factory and have never seen the workers at the looms, all standing behind the fine imprisoning strands of the warp, looking in a mirror to catch glimpses of the completed work, let it be said that the big tapestries for hanging are made on machines called high warp or *haute lisse*. Such was the manufacture at the Gobelins factory. But Colbert, never satisfied unless supplying his king with all the world could produce, introduced into his factory the low warp from Beauvais. By this means the royal factory could manufacture the small fine pieces designed especially for the covering of furniture. Enough of it remains to thrill us with delight by its tempered elegance

and dainty fancy. The factory at Aubusson existed at this time, but for the people only, and its product did not equal that of the royal looms.

Because Louis XIV (and we ourselves) owe to Colbert the development of this art which has made the world of interiors so much more beautiful to live in, it is with a feeling of personal regret that we reflect on the end of his influence, as well as on the end of the man himself. It was about 1667 that the royal factory was instituted; it was only five years later that Colbert's public influence began to abate, for an oppressed people unjustly accused him of the fault in over-taxing them for the martial splendours of the king. Colbert began to distrust his master, was filled with disgust at those acts of his which will ever revolt the moral mind, and gradually lost influence. His enemy, Louvois, coveted his place of intimacy with the king, and hesitated at nothing to secure it for himself by traduction. He lost by this means all credit at court, and in 1683 died of chagrin and was buried in the obscurity of night. His unhappy end is a reproach to the king he served with zeal.

Louvois succeeded him, and inaugurated the time of lessening perfection in the works of the royal factory of furniture for the crown. The new director was a man of little taste, but even worse than that, Louvois let his hatred of Colbert descend to such illiberal methods as to injure Le Brun, and

also to order destructive changes in the manufacture of tapestry. He was so petty as to stop the use of gold and silver thread in the tapestries, without which certain effects were not procurable, and actually had work discontinued on a magnificent piece designated by Le Brun himself, a series on the history of the king.

Louvois also signed an order by which the wonderful products of art of the gold and silver smiths, vases and the like, that represented fifteen years of labour in the Gobelins, were sent to the smelting-pot and used for coin. It was at this time that Le Brun died and was succeeded by a man without initiative and without genius. Thus the general work of the great factory gradually ceased, and nearly all the world forgets it had other products than tapestry.

Daniel Marot is one of the army of artists who must have a word, not only because he contributed to the magnificence of decorations in France, but because he was employed by William III in England as architect, and designed much of the furniture of Hampton Court. His drawings were employed by Boulle in the royal factory, and he seems to be responsible for many of the "grandfather clocks" of Chippendale. Distasteful as it is to find our cherished traditions in regard to the inventiveness of furniture-makers in England disappear under the information that history gives us, it is better to face the truth, expand the mind and taste, and take to

our hearts and homes the Continental work that inspired the Anglo-Saxon.

Just here it is more than interesting to note the flagrant introduction into French work of Chinese motif. People were travelling in those days, and brought home with them chiffons of Oriental ideas, and with these they dressed the European foundation. The result was fantastic and absurd, never serious, but it was undoubtedly these engrafted Chinese ideas that later on caught the eye of Chippendale when casting about for novelties. Holland's trade with China was the chief cause of this Chinese craze that affected both France and England.

But what is furniture without man, and of what use are decorations unless the eye of man rests upon their loveliness? To give these things value they must be associated with those for whom they were made. The list is long and brilliant in the time of Louis le Grand. Credit is to him, too, for royal favour then regulated national development, and had he been a mere profligate, a mere spender of money for self-indulgence and pleasure, it is possible that men like Racine, and Corneille, Fénelon, Fontaine, and Molière, might have hidden under a bushel. As it was, the king encouraged the productions of learned men and witty, and was himself an indefatigable worker. The eight hours of labour given so grudgingly by trades unions nowadays was the time the king voluntarily set for his own daily task.

As early as his twenty-first year he was employing the most gifted artists, authors, and musicians to make perfect a magnificent round of entertainments at Versailles. It was on this occasion that Molière brought with him a troupe of actors, and played with them *al fresco* on the lovely greensward with its surrounding shrubbery, — an ideal setting for a play, as all know who have had the pleasure of leaving a hot playhouse for an out-of-door performance. His audience was the whole court, gallants in wigs of such luxuriance as human hair never knew, with ruffles of lace frilling their silken clothing, and all the affectations which Molière himself ridicules with such fine humour. And the ladies of the time, their very names mean more of beauty and more of mind than any living woman could display, for over them all floats the golden mist of romance. At this distance even their sorrows seem but dashes of shadow to emphasise points of brilliance.

It was an age of splendour, a spectacular period, when few of the court seemed to lead real or serious lives. By the magnificence of apartments all made of gilded carving, hung with richest stuffs, and filled with furniture which an army of artists thought it sufficient ambition to produce, the people who lived in these rooms were encouraged to believe themselves superior to all others. The goddesses who looked down from carvings and from

tapestry flatteringly suggested comparison with the living, who were at times only too willing to take as moral examples the somewhat questionable amours of the Greek and Roman deities.

The king himself will always be remembered as regarding himself as no more hampered than great Jove, and the world will always remember that he so far persuaded the common people to his opinion that his lawful wife Queen Marie Therese, the Duchess de la Vallière, and Madame de Montespan were grouped as the three queens. Which received the greater attention at court is known.

It was not for the self-effacing suffering queen that the royal factory and the great artists were required to produce their gems of art. Her apartments were simple almost to discomfort until late in the reign, but on the lovely Duchess de la Vallière was heaped all that money could buy. That is possibly what won her, added to a reverence for royality that the republic mind cannot comprehend. Her conscience was too tender to be easily won or easily retained, and the king worked long and patiently at the congenial task. Being an aristocrat, her tastes were fine; being a beauty, artists delighted to please her, so that under the inspiration of her left-hand reign all the gifted men produced to the limit of their talent.

Yet, — and this will ever incline us towards her, —

after a time she renounced the unparalleled splendour, the unaccustomed luxury, and the royal presence which had lifted her to such power and conspicuousness. Her conscience could not be appeased without this renunciation and a subsequent immuring behind convent walls for long and dreary years, where she regained self-respect in penance. It is characteristic of that time that the position she renounced was coveted by all the ladies of the court, as it brought with it every form of worldly success, its holder being respected and reverenced; yet it was considered but right that de la Vallière should bury herself alive, a self-made outcast, while the monarch who was the cause of her renunciation kept the respect of the world in continuing his pitiless amours.

Pitiless they were not as regards Madame de Montespan, however, for this arrogant beauty had no scruples, no tenderness of heart, but was ever self-seeking at need and imperious in power. Her moral effect on the king we can fancy to be hardening. That the poor people were taxed almost to starvation to provide money for royal expenditure would not have caused her to plead their cause. That she should be provided with gowns, jewels, and furniture — which concerns us more — was of more importance than that the masses should have justice. And so, under the desire to please this sultana, Louis committed his greatest extrava-

gances, and the royal factory produced its great works of art.

It is agreeable in glancing at those times of blind adulation, when "the king can do no wrong" was one of the articles of faith, to consider a moment the daring rectitude of Bossuet, of whom the great Condé said, on seeing him mount the pulpit to preach to the court, "Silence, there is the enemy." He it was who made the rupture between the king and Madame de Montespan. Perhaps for art's sake it is as well that it did not last, and the reconciliation brought fresh gifts to the favourite from the hands of the great artists, but, alas, the union of art with morality has ever been dissoluble.

It were a more congenial statement that the beautiful equipments of palaces in those days were inspired by the king's love for Queen Marie Therese, but art shows a lofty lack of interest in morals or immorals, refusing to be concerned with either one of them, but only with talent and those who appreciate its products. The indignant exclamation of de Montespan at an expression of approval from a critic, "What, because I do one thing bad, must I do all the others?" contains the germ of a thought tending towards charity. To understand is to forgive, and at least she favoured the decorative arts which flowered splendidly for her.

The list of ladies for whose sake the royal lover

ordered the works of art in which the reign was so rich, is long and too well known to dwell on. Madame de Maintenon is the last, but hers was a rule of dignity and morality. It was not under her sway that the king ordered the fêtes of Versailles when he played "Apollo" and court beauties represented Venus, Psyche, and all the lovely crew, — fêtes where lotteries were held and costly pieces of furniture were given as prizes to the winners. It would probably rejoice a collector now to know that his carved gilt chair or his Boulle table had figured thus. It was Madame de Maintenon who came to the king in his maturity, and who developed in him the actuating thought that royalty was not a trade but a priesthood.

There was one woman who is recorded as having made as daring a departure in decorations as she did in intellectuality. This was the *spirituelle* and advanced Madame de Rambouillet, who coloured and draped her rooms in blue instead of the prevailing gold and red, and who gathered into them that class of high thinkers who have since been designated by her name. She is called the originator of the French *salon* and it is pleasing to turn from the heaviness and abuses of court life to the more intellectual atmosphere of her celebrated and virtuous home. This lofty lady scorned the use of the ruelle or alcove meetings, where the hostess received her guests in bed, and characterised her hotel with a refinement

beyond her times. Madame de Sévigné was another of the brilliant thinkers who lived and worked at this time, resting on the chairs we now call Louis Quatorze, and writing her intellectual papers from a bureau of Boulle.

Fig. 89. CHAIRS, LOUIS XIV

Fig. 40. A—ARMCHAIR, THE REGENCY
B—CANED CHAIR, THE REGENCY

CHAPTER V

THE STYLE OF LOUIS QUINZE

REIGN OF LOUIS XV — 1715-1774. REGENCY — 1715-1723

AS the Mohammedan lays aside his shoes when entering the temple, or the Chinese when entering his house, so we, when we enter into the decorative period which bears the name of the fifteenth royal Louis of France, are inclined to kick off the clods of the street and slip our tripping feet into red-heeled shoes, to carry a garlanded crook or a musical pipe in hand, and perch a wreath of flowers saucily sideways on well-coiffed head.

And as we would deck the person, in like manner prepare we the mind which it reflects, coming to the feast, to the music of the most sophisticated of shepherd's pipes, with a heart for any fate, so it be gay, a trifle mocking, capricious, and extravagant. All thoughts of seriousness are cast away, all responsibilities except that of mirth, and while the spirit of youth pervades all, it is assisted by an affectation of rusticity more than piquant.

Prepare the mind to dismiss its seriousness, even lay aside for the moment its moral prejudices so

that the time may again speak eloquently, as it did to those who lived and made it what it still remains, the most marvellous decorative period of France. The superlative is dangerous to use, for many men there be, and these have many minds and tastes, but if any one has prejudices against the work of this period they are founded, not on the style in its most exquisite development, but on those corruptions and exaggerations to which it easily lent itself. Indeed, its greatest beauties were exactly those features which were first tormented into the hideous, as, for example, the wonderful balanced relation of its irregular scrolls — but that we shall consider later.

The perfection of the style was produced by the best living artists and craftsmen, and it is their work which must be borne in mind when the style is considered. From whence their inspiration sprung it would be hard to say, so numerous were the sources, and even the East contributed artistic motifs, but from it all was evolved a style which belongs exclusively to France, and to her artists the honour. The period preceding turned a backward look over the shoulder towards Italy, as though the pomp of that old Rome which was being excavated was the desired motif for the Great Louis. Splendid the time was, and spectacular — but was it altogether a comfortable humanising sort of thing to live with? Its decorations when copied now are the favourites of big hotels and clubs which give space for their

architectural effects of pilasters, and its furniture is only appropriate in single pieces, unless one's home contains an immense gallery of tapestry or paintings.

And the period which follows, that of Louis XVI, went for its central thought again to Italy, where Pompeii was yielding herself to the excavators.

But the style of Louis XV was entirely French made, and this being the case, it is only a pleasure to look into the causes that produced it, the times that it reflects. If it is gay, is not gayety a necessity of bravery? If it is inconsequent, is not that its peculiar charm? If the style is illogical, does it not parry by baffling, and coquette with reason?

One style melts into another with no more discernible mark of division than separates the tints of a sunset sky, so already, before Madame de Maintenon bade farewell to her dying royal spouse, a foreshadowing had come of the comfortable curves that were to ease man's body in the succeeding reign, although the pretty decorative gambolling of shell and curve did not come until much later. The backs of chairs had already, however, departed from the rectilinear, and swept in a curve which had the hybrid look of all things transitional. The straight back, plain, with upholstery, or covered with a gilded carving, was more in keeping even though the head of the careless sitter may occasionally have received a knock in nesting itself among the protuberances.

But the true transitional period is due to the influence of him who was not monarch at all, but had the training of the succeeding one. Philippe de Bourbon was regent during the childhood of Louis XV, that baby monarch being but five years old on the death of his grandfather Louis XIV. As the child was allowed to reign, was called "of age" at thirteen, it is but natural to suppose that his uncle Philippe continued his sway over him, but his influence depended, alas, on the ways of effeminacy, and however much they may have helped out, they scarcely contributed to self-control and firmness of character.

It is only just to the king who gave himself over to such folly in his manhood to remember the influences that directed his childhood until the death of the regent in 1723. Philippe himself had not been hardened into vigour by those processes which we Anglo-Saxons consider necessary for the making of a man, but himself might have stood for model in one of Molière's satirical humourous plays which showed the follies of fashion. He is hardly disassociable from his pots of cosmetics, his rouge and powder, his curls and laces, his mincing ways. He was tied too closely to the side of his injudicious doting mother to develop as a man.

And so sweet luxury being the desire of those that stood in high places, the note was followed by the workers. Louis XV, brought up to self-indul-

Fig. 41. COMMODE, THE REGENCY

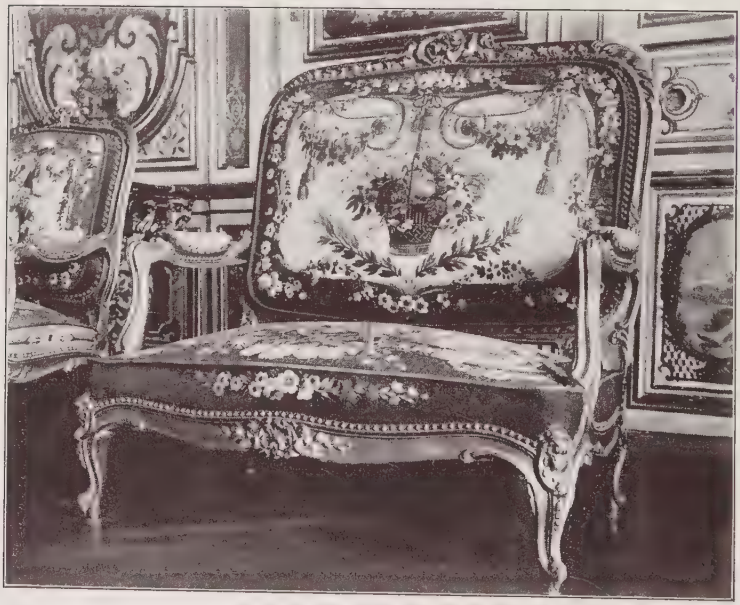


Fig. 42. A—CHAIR WITH TAPESTRY, LOUIS XV
B—SOFA, LOUIS XV

gence and ease, departed not from the ways in which he was trained, and so this time signalises the triumph of an artistic sensuality.

The State ateliers established under Henry IV and, as we have seen, so magnificently developed under Louis XIV, were still the centre of artistic production, notwithstanding that the high-minded and able Colbert and Le Brun were no more. *Un appartement au Louvre* was still an attainable prize, and the Gobelins factory was strong to produce, notwithstanding sundry shocks. The importance of these State ateliers cannot be over-estimated, for it is to them that France owes her best periods of applied arts, and without them there would not have been the co-ordination that leads to permanent result.

Those who look sadly on modern efforts, who think pessimistic thoughts over the forests of Michigan as presented in furniture form, must not compare these days of sporadic effort, of isolated individuals, with the time when the entire government co-operated to develop the arts and crafts. Such comparison would be unfair, but also such comparison makes us more than ever eager to procure for ourselves the works of the past.

Artists of the ateliers were quick to seize the new idea, to cater to a taste at variance with that which had for so long been sustained. The line of rectitude which the king in his age had attempted in life as well as in its decorative expression, melted into

curves beneath the warmth of luxury as ice-blocks melt beneath the sun. The regency lasted but eight years, yet in that time such changes came as would not have been thought possible, and from these changes grew all the daintily florid decoration of Louis XV, — the Well-Loved they call him, possibly concealing a double meaning in the title.

It is not supposable that any one exists who does not know the general characteristics of the style, for no patterns have been more assiduously copied than these, yet it was the daughter of a cultivated family who inquired if the difference between Louis XV and Louis XVI was not that one was crooked and the other straight. Unhappily for those who do know the fine points of difference to a degree exceeding this example, the market is now being flooded with cheap machine-made imitations, which bear a painful resemblance to the real. It is annoying, surely, to run against the echo of de Pompadour in the department store, set between kitchen hardware and groceries, but these impertinences of fresh wood and machine-turned tool are but upstarts, and, like the toadstools on the lawn, will not last. Perhaps they cultivate the public taste, but I doubt if that is ever done except by study of the best.

And the best — no matter how the prejudice of the day resents it — the best is of the past, and for this simple reason the mission of the French aristocracy of that day was to direct the arts of the

nation, to nourish the art of to-day and prepare the art of the future. These people's lives were not utterly frivolous when they co-operated with workers through their patronage instead of, as now, submitting their taste to the guidance of dealers at sales where prices are regulated by cupidity of the seller and ignorance of the buyer.

But if forms are copied, workmanship rarely is, and this must always be remembered. Being thus warned, we may consider a few examples of work and their salient features. In chairs, the greatest divergence is made from the preceding style. Comfort, ease, abandonment to pleasure, speaks from every line of the curvéd shapes, wherein not a single angle is to be found. One fancies the body at once relaxing, falling into a delicious abandon of attitude on the comfortable cushions within the wide-spread arms which invite the indolent frame. The supports are all curved, too, in their easy grace giving themselves to the line of pleasure and beauty. Straight were the chair-legs of the time of the Grand Monarque, but in his grandson's time such rigidity suggested work and duty, and these were the last things in the world that Louis XV cared to think about or to do. But as art concerns itself not with morals, it flourished happily without them, and we who believe that outward evidence corresponds to inward grace must hunt up some other theory of accounting for the exquisite results of this licentious time.

The chair called the chaise bergère was invented to the joy of those who like to sit long and lazily. Its arms embrace, and also enfold, with the upholstery, not content to rest in little pads for softening the asperities of wood against angular elbows, but reaching around the sides to the back, making cushioning complete. Thus could the sitter slant himself sideways with as great comfort as in sitting more properly, and thus were backs screened from draughts.

The wood was usually walnut, usually gilded, but before the gilder had his way the piece was long in the hands of one of the *sculpteurs du bois*, who carved thereon a pattern elegant in its entrancing details. The slender legs of graceful curve were decorated at foot and knee, formed in harmony with the design which followed all around the frame of the seat. The back was joyfully seized by the workers as a field for light fancy, and was treated as a decorative frame for holding the upholstered cushion. From a central shell or flower the carving fell in grace over the curving corners, clinging to the frame as softly as though the flowers had really grown in the terraced garden just outside, beside the artificial fountain.

The C curves, which were arranged with a symmetry that satisfies while it defies all rules, are seen more on larger decorations, chairs not being a fair field for their tricks of balance, but instead shells

and flame-like motifs half floral, suggesting everything and nothing; these, with realistic flower forms, were the basis for chairs and also sofas. Upholstery was considered too important to cede place to carving, for upholstery meant bodily comfort, and carving, which was meant for the eye, could be, and was, lavished on large pieces and on walls, where was no question of contact.

The covering of chairs was less awe-inspiring, less suggestive of pomp and its prodigious formalities than in the preceding reign. The huge designs, appropriate only to a church or hall, were replaced by the smaller and pleasant patterns that invite near and familiar inspection. The licentiousness of the day it is not agreeable to dwell upon, but the human note in design, the coming down, as it were, from the court of pompous Jove to the elegant familiarity of a boudoir, touches an answering chord of sympathy in our modern taste.

This was especially a time of the boudoir, in other words, intercourse with persons of importance was had in a prettier way than hitherto when the monarch and all great personages gave audience enthroned at one end of a discouragingly large room, after the manner of the stage. The ways of Louis XV lacked dignity for all kingly purposes, but for our domestic and social uses the fittings of the boudoir are a pleasing remainder of the time when beautiful comfort became the fashion.

To suit the elegance of the chairs and sofas of the time, then, the silks made at Lyons were gentler in design, usually floral with a prettily naturalistic quality, suggesting the sophisticated garden where none but choice flowers were allowed to bloom. Occasionally a stripe was woven, but this in general is accorded to the succeeding style and, for some arbitrary unreason, is apportioned to Marie Antoinette alone.

The tapestry factories at this time were kept active supplying coverings for chairs; and however workmen were oppressed then to finish with skill, but haste, the pieces for chairs, sofas, and screens, that the soubrette du Barri or the merciless de Pompadour might not be kept waiting for her luxuries, nowadays we know no sentiment but unrestrained pleasure on beholding a piece of Beauvais left from those times. It is no exaggeration to say that such pieces are intoxicating in their loveliness of design and colour, a monument not to the immorality of conspicuous patrons of art, but to the gifted invention and inspired industry of the artists who designed, and the craftsmen who conscientiously executed.

Each piece of tapestry was a perfect composition, carefully proportioned to the place it filled, and as all artists worked in unison to complete one thought, the woodwork of the piece was arranged about the tapestry as a frame encloses a picture. No daintier conception has ever occurred, and perfect harmony

Fig. 43. DOORWAY, LOUIS XV

Fig. 44. SCREEN, LOUIS XV

is the result. An examination of the examples given will reveal the beauties of this system.

The Gobelins factory wove mainly the large tapestries used for enriching walls, and the noticeable change at this time was in design. Oudry was now director, and he, in trying to paint with wools, greatly over-stepped the possibilities of the medium. To be explicit, the older weavers employed but nineteen colours, and these of sufficient strength to last, but under the new idea of faithfully copying large paintings which were executed without the slightest reference to dyed wools, this new idea demanded so many tones that the number grew to a thousand colours of twelve shades each. The pictures were faithfully copied, but such delicacy of shading could not long withstand the assaults of sunlight, and have now faded until original effects are lost. For this reason the older tapestries with their honest colours are more sought.

Boucher succeeded Oudry, and it is easy to see how his delectable touch, his peachy skin-textures would fade when entrusted in all their delicacy to any less changeable medium than paint. Both he and Oudry were influential in changing the class of design. Martial magnificence and solemn pomp, whether of the Romans or of the Grand Louis, were not in keeping with the softness of the court of Louis XV, and artists, not wishing to present unwelcome subjects to their patrons, drew sylvan

scenes, wherein disported sophisticated maids with mock-modest mien and boldly persistent gallants in inappropriate silks and satins.

Ridiculously futile and too consistently amorous these fanciful people parade before the eyes of practicality, but they have a power to charm into unwonted *alligresse* the descendants of the Puritans' shovel-hat and linsey-woolsey frock. They were done with the touch of the true artist, and so they live and tell us that joy is as much a part of life as joylessness. Boucher has left us many a painting of this class besides the charming portraits of the young daughters of Louis XV, which glow sweetly from the canvas and claim the admiration that is beauty's due.

No large piece of furniture of the time we are considering was complete without the metal mounts introduced by Boulle, originally to cover the join at the corners of his shell and metal inlay. The perfection of these mounts is reached in the world-celebrated piece in the Louvre known as *le Bureau du Roi.* This metal work was executed by Oeben, the pupil of Boulle, assisted by Riesener. Another conspicuous metal worker was Jacques Caffieri whose history and whose family history is matter of record and gossip. It interests, because it illustrates the times and shows a little of life outside Versailles and other palaces, the life of the commoner of whom one hears so little in this reign. The first Caffieri was

imported by royal favour from Italy to execute the king's pleasure in his handicraft, leaving the service of so great a person as Pope Alexander VII. His son Jacques worked at the Gobelins factory when it was producing its marvels of metal work, and took first rank, not only in execution but in design. To him is due the substitute of another leaf in place of the age-honoured acanthus, the leaf of the endive or celery. Its decorative advantages are many, for while embellishing it did not conceal, but leaves exposed the wood or stone behind it, trailing itself in light fantastic curls peculiar to this period.

After the Regency all attempt at having a design alike on both sides of a given centre disappeared in metal mounts, and the handles of drawers, escutcheons and the like, strayed into delightful abandon, yet never disturbed harmony. Only masters like Gouthière and Caffieri could originate a style which combined so happily rebellion and accord.

The name of Gouthière is associated with a bit of personal history. He, like Caffieri, worked at embellishment of the king's *meubles*, and more especially at those for the king's favourites, producing candelabre, branch lights, and such independent pieces, in addition to the decoration of tables and cabinets, down to the very keys which were sometimes marvels of small design and which now we prize so highly.

Gouthière was employed by the heartless du Barri, La Petite Jeanne as she was called, but probably not

in affection. With the wild prodigality of the day, and more especially of those whom the king's conduct caused to forget that money had a value or coffers a limit, this spoiled grisette ordered of Gouthière so much of his work that she fell in debt to him for 756,000 francs. The favourite could not pay, the king was dead. Gouthière applied to the State, which repudiated the debt, for a new order reigned. Another case of serving with too much zeal an unworthy master. Gouthière, however, lived to see another day, for he was but thirty-four, in the height of his talent's productiveness, when Louis XV died. This artist was the inventor of the dead gold finish on metal which has ever since added refinement to gilded bronze.

We are considering a time when names are not disassociable from works. Where now could we find the name of the man who made a piece of modern furniture? The name of the manufacturing firm perhaps, but not that of the man who gave grace to the design and elegance to the finish — for the work is subdivided and one man makes a leg, another a draw, another assembles the parts, and another affixes metal mounts moulded by the thousand, and no man of them all ever sees or cares to see the completed whole.

One cannot go far in mentioning the conspicuous features of decoration at this time, without mentioning the names that have become immortal in their

Fig. 45. A—ENAMELED CHAIR, LOUIS XV
B—ARMCHAIR, LOUIS XIV

Fig. 46. DECORATIONS, LOUIS XV

line of decorative art. There is, for instance, the exquisite Vernis-Martin with its satisfying loveliness, its sleek beauty. There was a whole family of Martins, and they were nothing but coach varnishers, until inspired by the incomparable lacquer imported from China and Japan. The father of these industrious men was a simple tailor, a fact which sets one wondering, as sporadic cases of talent seem to contradict the theory that like produces like. Voltaire in a play represents the titled heroine of the piece as receiving a valuable specimen of Vernis-Martin for a wedding gift, showing the high esteem in which it was held.

The discovery of this lacquer enabled large pieces of furniture to be embellished in a way hitherto impossible, a way which charms with its daintiness. Watteau himself painted for the Martins his entrancing scenes of rustic affectation, the portrayal of sophisticated youth ever playing at pretty innocence, all elegantly arrayed, continuing their duel of love amid pastoral scenery.

The method of making the lacquer which preserved these paintings was elaborate and costly, and suited the time. Large fields were covered with green of a shade both restful and piquant, powdered with gold, and this is especially associated with the name of Martin, and is reproduced even to-day. It was an ideal background for the dainty paintings of Watteau and Boucher, but also has charm enough to need

but slight embellishment. Large fields were sought for this treatment, as its beauty was lost on small surfaces, therefore, it was used for large panels for over-mantles and over-doors.

The sedan chair was one of the coquettish luxuries of the day, and these afforded an unusually fine surface for decoration. Fortunate indeed are those who can find one now. Little danger there is that my lady's chair will ever again stand outside with lackeys, for now it is an honoured guest in the drawing room, where, posing as a cabinet, it speaks with piquant suggestion of the intrigues at which it once assisted, of powdered wigs and patches, of masks and veils, of pursuing footsteps, dropped notes, and all the rest of the play that seems but a play when seen at this distance, but was alternately gay and bitter, serious and sweet, as life is now in the modern home which harbours this relic of Vernis-Martin.

It was the fashion to paint the wood in those days for some of the delicate boudoirs and chambers, to paint it in the palest shades and soften all the paint with many a coat of varnish carefully rubbed down. Enamelling, we would call the process now. Carved chairs were not thus treated, but those in which the sweeping lines were uninterrupted, and this made a cheaper sort of furniture for purposes and homes where elaboration was not required.

Inlay of woods — not metal and shell — were astonishingly unambitious, considering the tendency

to let decoration run riot. Exception must be made, however, to such work as Riesener's on the *Burcau du Roi*. The usual patterns were a sort of diaper, varied by floral sprays of an impoverished nature, as though the artist were handling an unaccustomed medium, one not thoroughly understood. The manner of panelling in the time of Louis XIV was continued, slightly more elaborate, that is, panels were made by cutting and laying the wood with the grain running in slanting lines instead of horizontal or perpendicular. Commodes of bombé shape were usually decorated with veneer thus applied instead of leaving exposed the wood of which the piece was made.

The habit of incrustation was still strong in the makers. Perhaps it remained for the entry of mahogany to route it in the arts as applied to furniture, and that across the channel. Tulip, maple, rosewood, amaranth, represents some of the woods used in these attempts at inlay which have a certain quaintness as of an old-fashioned bouquet. Perhaps marquetry was not thought artistic by those fine designers, for it was flourishing in Holland and could not, therefore, have been unknown. Indeed, there are many who hold this opinion now, especially in America where, the best dealers say, it is hard to find a market for it.

In 1753 Louis XV made a royal institution of the Sèvres porcelain factory. This gave fresh impetus to the work, and made fashionable its wares for more

uses than merely setting out feasts for fastidious beauties where moral frailty exceeded that of the *pâte tendre*. The makers of furniture planted dainty placques in their work, where they still stay in undaunted brightness, a contrast to the time-marked wood that frames them. Watteau scenes and ladies' portraits were painted on the placques, and du Barri pink became a popular border. Gouthière, whose love of elaborate detail was ever casting about to paint the lily and refine gold, hit upon the vases of the Sèvres factory, and twined about them his unsurpassed metal mounts, and others followed him.

It was at this time that mirrors were introduced over mantles in place of the heavy carvings of the preceding reign, or the painted panels of the present one. The frames made admirable opportunity for decoration, one blending with the general scheme of the room. One might think that the vanity of the day would have rejoiced in this opportunity to see the face and toilette reflected at every turn, but a French writer of the time complains pettishly at the innovation, that they are a cause of sterility and produce nothing but the figures of those before them.

The especial feature of this decorative period is the well-known rococo or rocaille, which is so well known as to make even its mention seem unnecessary. The connection is apparent between the name and the rocks and shells to which are accredited the inspiration of the style. With its irregular symmetry we

are familiar, but before the audacity of its original designers, we must ever stand admirers. To appreciate the daring and the originality, we have but to consider the time preceding, when classic rectangularity signalised all constructive lines.

Apartments had hitherto been treated almost like embellished exteriors. Under Nicolas Pineau the architectural effects vanished, and rooms became a field for the gentle play of delicate relief laid on with refined energy of design. Ornament was drawn with power and grace, and a rich treatment of sculptured wainscot took the place of architecture.

It is said of Pineau that he achieved a determined symmetry by the ingenious balance of opposing curves, giving no hint of the excesses into which it was betrayed by those who took his thought but not his art. This sums it all, the perfection and the decadence of the Louis Quinze style; its secret lies in the happy conception of its balanced relations, its ruin is the perversion or misuse of these.

Those who condemn the style as a voluptuous perversion must consider its best expression, and there will be found abundant evidence of its beauty. It was too marked in its peculiarities not to have many imitators, and these have travestied the work of its originators so that any irregular distortion of Spain or Italy is called after this period. To show the excesses to which these countries let unrestraint rule, a console is illustrated from the palace of the

Corsini in Rome. A comparison of this with the two doors given on other plates shows the difference between talent and coarse imitation.

It is impossible to look on the work of this period with a cold eye, for it speaks not alone the language of art but of human interest, a tie which obliterates time and circumstance. We know that the apartments at Versailles, decorated with an art "seductively elegant in all its details," held men and women whose lives might be similarly described. The consummate art of these chairs and sofas was more than equalled by the social arts of those who reposed in them their voluptuous forms and plotted their many intrigues for the heart of a lady or the possession of royal favour. On yonder dainty desk of Vernis-Martin, notes were penned which set hearts abeating with what passed for love; behind that threefold screen hid youths or ladies caught where they should not be; and on that table lay a telltale fan left by a flying dame.

It was a pretty time, but a depraved. Looked at only on the surface we can adore it, feed our fancy with its piquancy, its audacity, and its consummate talent for giving pleasure. We can see a flock of lovely women — always young, always beautiful, always dressed in elegant picturesqueness — women with a wit which sparkles the more brilliantly for its setting. These privileged creatures seem always to be doing the agreeable things of life, dancing

Fig. 47. CHAIR, LOUIS XV

Fig. 48. A SALON AT VERSAILLES

Fig. 49. BAROMETER, LOUIS XV

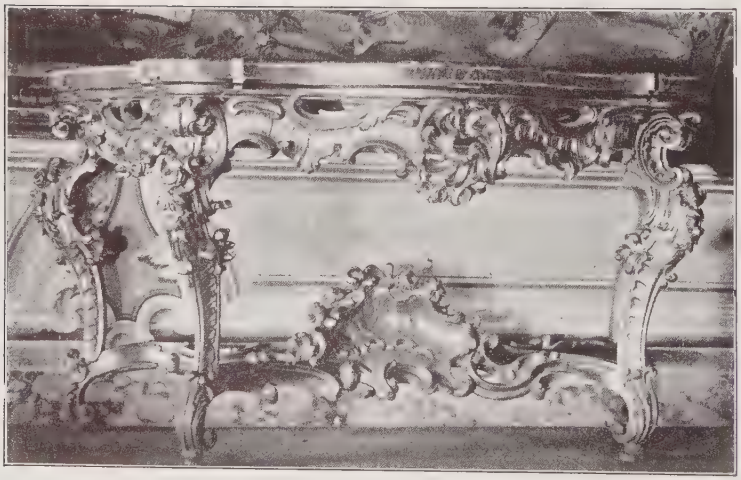


Fig. 50. GILT CONSOLE, LOUIS XV (DECADENT)

coquettishly over terraces, or half hiding in a bosquet, with the inevitable accompaniment of gayly suing lovers, music, laughter, and an inseparable elegance.

Looking deeper, we see unpleasant retributions — heavy ennui that succeeds indulgence of the senses, remorse, regrets, and baffled ambitions among those of high estate, cynicism among the philosophers, and unmitigated suffering among the poor, and already the deeper imprecating groans that presage the Revolution. The time of Louis XIV had faults to deplore, and weaknesses to ridicule, but it had been a time of building up. The time of Louis XV was a time of destroying.

The king himself, we all know him, and in him see the good and the bad. We look delighted on his young beauty, his strong, young manhood, and are gratified that he was always the most beautiful youth in France, and it gives us pleasure that when he rode out to war at the head of his army, his was the most superb physique. Yet it is not sweet to remember that he allowed the Duchess of Chateaureaux to follow him, and that he went to Metz with his accompanying train like that of an Asiatic monarch.

The people called him the Well-Loved, and he had qualities warranting it, but he chose to exercise those qualities on unworthy objects. The training he had received under the regent had not fitted him to resist temptation, so when it assailed him through the schemes of a corrupt court, he yielded elegantly and

often. The reiterated choice of weakness made of him the blindest and most inefficient of rulers, for absorbed in those matters which make for us such picturesque reading, he let affairs of the nation suffer beyond repair. He amused himself with the three de Nésle sisters one after the other, while war was going on; under the enchantment of de Pompadour he senilely ceded the territories by treaty which it had cost the country millions of money and rivers of blood to win. Before the treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle he was devoting himself to his favourite; and at the time of settling, sensuality had produced in him the weakness and indecision which led him to say to his astounded generals that he would make a treaty not as a haggling merchant, but with the royal generosity of a king. And thus lightly he gave up all they had won for France.

Certain names mean certain periods, and seem their crystallised essence. The two names of this time which represent its lighter side are Madame de Pompadour, born Antoinette Poisson, and Madame du Barri, born Jeanne Vaubernier.

For the Pompadour the king set artists and factories to work to produce the decorations and the furniture, the paintings and the bibelots that now we prize so dearly. Unlike the favourites of Louis XIV, this woman was of the common people. So also was du Barri, which gives rise to the theory that this is a bourgeois period of art, an attempt to

please the taste of bourgeoise and grisette. But the conceptions of the leading artists were not thus debased. They were brilliant and gifted enough to please alike those who understood their art, and those to whom mere prettiness was beguiling.

De Pompadour had her brother put in the place occupied by Colbert, and this gave him the direction of the applied arts. He, with Soufflot, took a journey down into Italy, and from this grew a great matter, one destined to set the note for the next great decorative period. This journey was responsible for the beginning of a pseudo-classic revival.

She worked hard, this brilliant bourgeoise, to satisfy the king's fickle taste and gratify her own untiring vanity. We think of her as leading the lightest of lives, but in reality it was one full of unceasing effort. Voltaire and the philosophers were among her affectations and dealt out much flattery to this woman who ruled in place of the pious queen, Marie Leczinska. As a bit of decoration we tolerate her, but the French feeling can be found in the laconic description of La Rousse in his incomparable dictionary, wherein he says laconically, she was the favourite of Louis XV, and she cost France — not the king, mind — forty millions by her prodigalities.

It was by caprice of du Barri that the Pavilion at Lucennes was made a suitable residence for a king, for this king was more fond of the life of a private gentleman than of regal grandeur. He would at

any time desert the palace for the private house of elegance, where he could amuse himself in petty talk, in mixing sauces to pique his palate, in working tapestries to try his manual skill. In the grisette du Barri he found what he needed to amuse him after all else had palled, but France calls her the Doorkeeper of the Revolution.

It were sad indeed if all the beauty and elegance of this time were used only by roués and courtesans. But we can always reflect with satisfaction on the consistent virtue of the queen and her bevy of young daughters, whose tastes also were pleased by the productions of the artists and ateliers.

Fig. 51. SEDAN CHAIR, LOUIS XV

Fig. 52. ARMCHAIR, LOUIS XVI

CHAPTER VI

THE STYLE OF LOUIS SEIZE

REIGN OF LOUIS XVI — 1774-1793

THE two styles of Louis Quinze and Louis Seize ever stand as rivals. Together they present themselves before the decorator, the home-maker, the collector; two charming beauties, they stand in bewildering attractions awaiting choice. Which will you take, the most talented of original conceptions, or the chaste adaptations of classic models?

The choice is hard to make, harder after studying a little into what produced these styles than when mere haphazard instinct regulates the decision. The modern cheap decorator has spoiled for the novice half the pleasure which the style Louis Quinze should give, for with his pointed paste-bag he traces all over cheap interiors a base imitation of the carved relief which played with such wondrous touch on the walls of the French palaces and châteaux. And the furniture factories have supplemented this wedding-cake decoration with hybrid chairs and tables, which suggest, alas, while degrading, the royal styles they

imitate. Just why correctness of line cannot be maintained is one of those mysteries which depend on another mystery — public taste, and on the desire of the vendor to offer something entirely new.

In its overdoing also the style Louis Quinze suffers more than any other. From its very originality it is vulnerable to the assaults of perverted taste, and its exaggeration leads to caricature. It is called a voluptuous style, but to that may be said that it is only so in the hands of coarse designers. In its purest expression it is delicate enough to excite the admiration of the most fastidious taste. Transferred to the warmer countries of Italy and Spain, unrestraint marks it for a quick exaggeration, its intellectual quality is lost, and it becomes indeed gross, offensive, decadent. From the examples shown of this we turn revolted and scoffing.

But a study of the style in its most refined development, as it proceeds from the hands of the artists of the art-encouraging State ateliers, cannot fail to win for it the admiration of those whose taste is the most sensitive. To find it typical of moral rectitude, to seek among its sinuous curves for the unswerving line of duty, to follow the tracery of its erratically balanced relations in the hope of reaching a firm foundation — is to meet disappointment. If the style means anything at all, it means the triumph of beauty; and when beauty assails, reason has no part. But the production of so much

beauty by man, not Nature, means intellectual effort as well as talent.

What might be called the moral prejudice against the style lies largely in attributing its development to the taste of Mesdames de Pompadour and du Barri. It is regretted that to these depraved conscienceless *bourgeoises* should be given so much credit. For them the beautiful furniture was made, but drawing and execution were by men of talent and industry, and to them the honour. If in their lives appear moral irregularities incompatible with rectitude, then the corruption of the times is responsible, and their talent is their sufficient excuse for being.

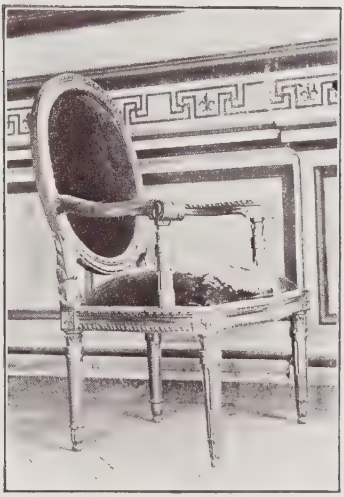
Not with one sudden bound does a new style supplant its predecessor, but transition periods intervene when designers are trying new effects and people are testing the novelty. They are not always agreeable to study, for in the first gropings the old style is suffering and the new is not matured. A careful study of perfected styles gives an unconscious equipment for distinguishing the transitional, and this is in general the better way, one less likely to result in confusion. Yet a change which forecast the style Louis Seize had begun long before Louis XV and his famous favourites had ended their reign.

It is recorded that an Italian tour was taken by the brother of de Pompadour, who was now in the place occupied by Colbert, and that with him went Soufflot, the artist. It is also a fact that attention

in Italy at this time was directed to the excavations at Herculaneum and Pompeii. The discovery of these buried cities was made some time previous, but owing to want of funds the work went on slowly. We are familiar with the purity of the designs unearthed, their Greek origin, their severe line, and chaste detail. Is it difficult to see the analogy between these and the rectangular forms with dainty embellishment of the style Louis Seize? Add to this a fresh study by the French of the refined ornament of the best period of the Renaissance in Italy, and we have the source of inspiration of the style which so admirably suits our modern uses.

It was at Luciennes that Louis XV established du Barri, and it was here his majesty took pleasure in forgetting duty to the State by playing the private gentleman of fortune. The command of the grisette who ruled him was to make a royal residence of the miniature palace, and it was done. Luciennes, we are told, was decorated in what we call the style Louis Seize. This, be it observed, was late in the reign of Louis XV, and interests because it shows how early the change began and how arbitrary is the apportionment of names. After all, it is the artists who make the style, and not the patron.

The same artists lived and designed through parts of two reigns, and thus turned their fertile brains and adroit hands to two widely diverging styles; indeed, to them must be given the credit of the new



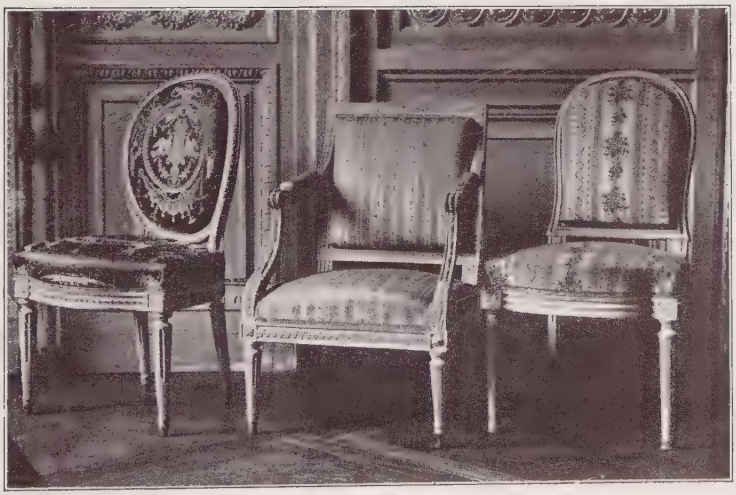


Fig. 53. CHAIRS, LOUIS XVI

Fig. 54. VITRINE, LOUIS XVI

inventions. Unhappily the State ateliers were beginning to disintegrate, and court patronage disappeared with the Revolution.

Before the death of Louis XV the Dauphin had acquired the age of nearly twenty years, and was already married, and an applicant for some of the furniture *de luxe* of the celebrated makers. A change of style is noticeable in much that was made for him. The time of rectangles was coming in. And it is true that at the time Marie Antoinette appeared from Vienna as bride to the Dauphin, she found already in vogue the style which we name for her.

Possibly the temperament of the Dauphin unconsciously inspired the artists, for his nature, though weak, was not lost in a worship of the senses, nor in the profound ennui which follows their indulgence. Lacking the force of Louis XIV, he also rose superior in morals to Louis XV, and the Revolution which made him its victim drew its nourishment from roots planted in the prodigalities, the vacillations, the criminal neglect of political functions by Louis XV.

In a general way the style of Louis Seize is familiar to all. Its type is one easily imitated, and it may also be said less offensively imitated than styles less chaste. There are those who call it impoverished, a feeble reflection of the antique, and see in it neither comfort nor elegance. It is difficult for Northern taste so to view it. It may not

be inspiring, it may even be petty, but it never obtrudes. It is said of fashion that to know how ugly are its inventions they should be viewed when their hour is past. The style Louis XVI is never ugly, in the mode or out of it, and this fact alone proclaims eloquently its superiority.

In form it is rectangular. No feats of balance are attempted either in chairs or larger pieces, but everything rests on straight lines. Its beauty lies in fine outlines of rare delicacy and in the unsurpassed purity of its ornament. Its detractors say that in this is no art, that its unimaginative designers strove to make finish and lavish expenditure atone for poverty of invention. To this we cannot agree, especially as the style has inspired the most exquisite of the English cabinet-makers, Thomas Sheraton.

Let us review a few of its characteristics that we may know the reason for admiring this style, the meaning of its symbols, and the touch of the artists who invented or adapted them.

Chairs, sofas, tables, commodes, desks, all stand straight, with most engaging honesty, — the pretty, embellished honesty of children at a class of dancing, sophisticated, but none the less true. The cabriole leg of furniture has disappeared, and instead we have a slender, tapering shaft, free from underframing, poised lightly on the parquet.

With delight the designer has created these utili-

tarian supports, giving them the look of shafts shot to earth from some aerial archer. Invariably classic is their detail, and the most of them are fluted. How to vary this fluting was the pride of handicraft. Between the fluting was a line of threaded beads or husks or shorter flutings, or the flutes were lined with brass or tipped with metal beading, in the case of ormolu-mounted pieces. The finish at the foot was capped with a ring or an acanthus cup, or one of the vase-like terminals of Pompeian chair-legs. The finish at the top was carved into a tiny wreath of exquisite fineness, or a row of beading, or finished with torch-like effect. Indeed this effect of a torch was the one most sought.

In important pieces, the classic motif of bound arrows was employed and formed the corner of bureaus and commodes. The legs of tables were like those of chairs, elongated, excepting that as tables were usually richly mounted a departure could be made from the manner of treating wood alone, and female heads of ormolu were used to crown the shaft of wood and support the table top.

It was in the preceding style that chairs received that perfection of form which left not one part unfinished, — a shape which framed the upholstery, while not becoming subservient to it, a beautiful union of art and utility. The same system is followed in the chairs we are now considering, even though the shape has lost its curves. The decora-

tions of these pieces is a carving of such exquisite finish and design that the names of Verbeckt and Rousseau come down to us as artists in that work. Fineness of detail is one of the charms of this style which seems made expressly that persons of wealth might exhibit their good taste. The finest details of Pompeii, the most refined carvings of the Italian Renaissance are copied onto the chairs and sofas, executed with a skill which is not even attempted in these hasty days.

The arms of chairs which are fitted with this comfortable addition are worth a little close observation, to show how the decoration gives reason for the curve which rests one end on top the front leg with absolute harmony of purpose. Chair-backs are not always square, as may be seen from the plates, but their simple regular curves are never to be confounded with the sinuous lines of the preceding style.

The sofa at this time grew longer, as though not to crowd into close proximity the pair who rested on it for *causerie*, and no difficulties of construction were offered by this elongation as would have been in the designs of Louis XV. Wood by its very nature needs to be used according to the grain, and not weakened by the curves that make metal but stronger. A longer body for the sofa meant more straight legs set under it like little columns supporting an architrave.

Cushions for sofas and for *chaises bergères*, as well as for the ordinary armchair, were luxurious even beyond the highest invention of our own luxury producing age. Springs were unknown — were unwanted — as long as they were superseded by plump cushions of the softest down that was ever plucked from eider-duck. These cushions, lying loose, were in use in the previous reign, but are more closely associated with this of Louis XVI.

Stuffs for covering were as rich as looms could make, but the drawing changed to suit the smaller detail of the wood carving. Delicate colours prevailed, being a necessity for that furniture which was enamelled in white. Stripes of many fine lines embellished with floral interruptions were in great favour, yet not in the exclusion of more generous designs in naturalistic flowers and foliage.

Tapestry from Beauvais, and from Aubusson, the tapestry of the *basse lisse* or low-warp, was rightly the preferred covering, but even kings did not have every chair and sofa fitted with this ideal fabric.

It is complained of tables of the period that the tapering leg — so light and tasteful on chairs — by elongation gave an effect of instability to the top, and a generally thin, poor look. It is true, perhaps, and the writer knows from experience that when a marble top is added to the weight, the whole acquires an instability which mutely begs for tender handling. But the life led by those of high estate in the time of

Louis XVI was a dainty, delicate one of little strain, and heavy burdens were not desired by either men or tables.

The introduction of mahogany, the use of amboyna wood and tulip and rosewood, all helped to make these tables what they were, a contrast in colour to the furniture designed for holding the human frame. Chairs and sofas were rarely left in the natural wood, and when not enamelled were skilfully gilded.

The dark rich woods required different treatment. The shell inlay of Boulle had gone out of fashion, but its residuum was the bronze mount. The feeling for incrusting furniture with ornament gave way to a preference for exposing the beauty of the wood itself. But the dark background thus obtained was an ideal contrast for the gilded bronze. So tables were in general of polished wood much mounted.

The same holds true of large pieces like vitrines or cabinets, commodes, desks, and the like. Wherever possible marble was used as a top, although inlay was at a perfect state of development.

The real beauty of all these large pieces lies not in their construction, though against that not a word can be said, for since originality may be lacking, it offends no one's taste through all the changing centuries of changing fashions. But no one can look upon fine specimens of the metal work of this period without feeling a thrill of admiration for the work, and a desire to know more of the men

Fig. 55. A—BEDROOM OF MARIE ANTOINETTE
B—RECEPTION ROOM OF MARIE ANTOINETTE

Fig. 56. SOFA. PETIT TRIANON. LOUIS XVI

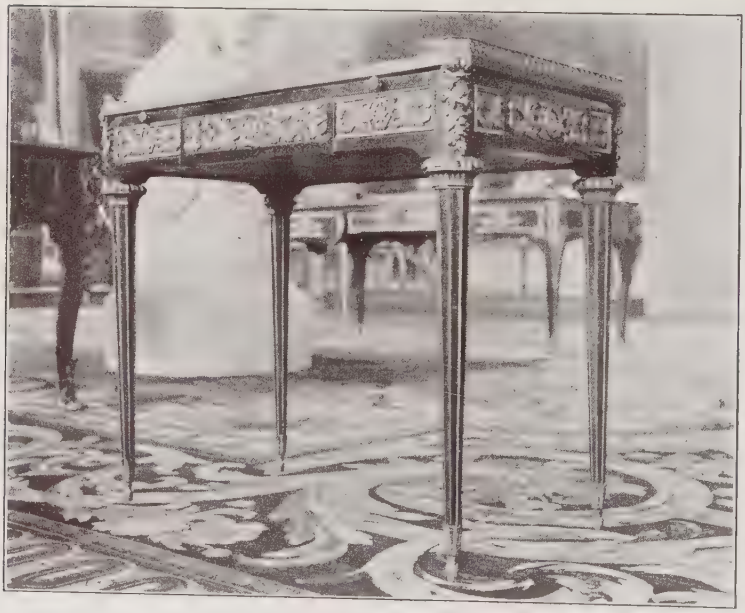


Fig. 57. TABLE DESK, LOUIS XVI

who produced it — to say nothing of registering a resolve to become the possessor of at least one fine specimen.

The curled endive of Caffieri which strayed with luxuriant abandon, is coarse and unfeeling beside the miniature detail of Gouthière, Thomiere and other workers for the Petit Trianon. The chiselers, engravers, artists, all concentrated their attention on minute detail, and carried their work to a perfection equalling that of the goldsmith. New effects were produced by new blending of metals, two shades introduced in one pattern, but this was hardly necessary, as the effects of varied colour were given by the perfect sculpturing of the dead gold finish.

The feet of tables and vitrines were shod with bronze ferrules, and the top of the legs finished with bronze caps, while every moulding was supplied with a line of running detail. A flat panel called for an open pattern of twisted wreaths, or for an ambitious design executed with the care now lavished only on a silver "cup" for some international contest of sports. Indeed, so fine is this old work that bits of it might almost be worn as jewelry.

Large designs of trophies changed entirely from the warlike victories and half-Roman drawing to those which reflected more the thoughtless life of the court, lived for the great part in blind ignorance of the real state of France. In place of arms and ar-

mour, there were the arrows of Love, the accessories of music, and in place of the victor's palm, the hero's bay, there were garlands of roses from my lady's bower. A reflection in art of the change in royal intent from the days of Louis XIV is what this alteration might be called. The lighter way of taking life must be reflected in the surroundings of those who led it, and artists were trucklers to royal favour — hardly to their pecuniary profit, however, for almost always the crown paid slowly, if at all, and even Gouthière died a ruined man.

Martin Carlin is the name of the metal worker who is held responsible for what might be called a buncombe design, but which is too closely identified with this period not to be mentioned. It is the band of gilded decoration that imitates a line of drapery caught up at brief intervals with the silly effect of tiny tassels. It edges tables and is often seen as a finish to the shelves of vitrines, but in its lack of art looks like a stock ornament of last resort. Galleries around the top of tables and cabinets were a feature of the time, gracefully combining beauty and utility.

This was a time of porcelain. Vases imported from China were eagerly seized on by Gouthière, Thomiere, and others, and were mounted in bronze with fine skill and lively imagination. Placques from the Sèvres factory were taken by the furniture-makers for insertion in their work, but the effect does not appeal to the modern eye except as a curiosity.

The famous Riesener was producing his wondrous inlay all through the period, and lived to see the havoc of the Revolution. He was a master in his art, and played on a scale of colour supplied by all the choice woods of the day, amboyne, tulip, mahogany, ebony, and all others whose tones added soft richness to the work. Lacs were at their height, and were used in panels or to cover the entire surface of a piece.

In general decoration of a room, the return to architectural effect was directly due to the revived study of the antique. Fluted pilasters from floor to cove were the fundamental idea, and the spaces left between were panelled and decorated with the delicate drawing of panels of Pompeii, or the Renaissance. Doors lost their rounded tops and wavering panels, and became again rectangular except for the daintily composed decoration in attenuated scrolls, vases, animal forms and amorini.

A time of non-constructive decoration is this period, in contradistinction to the one preceding it where the lines of decoration were made to uphold — an impossible conception for any but the most certain of artists when the lines were all sinuous. And yet, even though the style Louis Seize may not have required such genius to produce, it is one which never tires the eye nor affronts the taste, and one which imitators cannot readily caricature with their ignorantly made horrors.

Whatever is said in criticism of Marie Antoinette, and of Louis XVI can never be said without kindness, because of the terrible tragedy of their death, met with a bravery that could scarcely have had its origin on that day, but must have been the result of a dormant strength which the lives of kings do not always develop.

True it is that the queen was either seeking playful retirement away from the oppressive grandeur of palaces, or else meddling inconveniently with the affairs of State. To indulge her love for mock industry the king gave to her the Petit Trianon, which he had fitted up in the perfection of the style known by her name and by his. In this place she and her ladies played dairy-maid to their hearts' satisfaction, and it is of the daintiest of the furniture of this place that a prejudiced writer says, "Pretty, elegant, irrational, and entirely useless, this costly furniture might be said to stand as a symbol of the life which the Revolution swept away."

With the Revolution came the rule of the democrat, and iconoclasm was the order of the day. The State ateliers were no more, no more was royal patronage. The wonders of Versailles, to whose production men of genius had thought it a privilege to consecrate their lives, were desecrated by the wild mob who were in possession.

Two years after the execution of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette in Paris, the self-made authorities

Fig. 58. A—SOFA, LOUIS XVI
B—COMMODE, LOUIS XVI

Fig. 59. CABINET, LOUIS XVI
Candelabra by Gauthière

ordered everything within the palace of Versailles sold at public auction, and thus were scattered the wondrous works of the applied arts that a mere recent government has tried in vain to re-assemble. Among those at this famous auction stood Riesner, the celebrated craftsman who had served two kings. In the sadness of the tragedy, although cumbered with debt, he honoured his art and his dead patrons too much to let all go. Several of the pieces of furniture *de luxe* were bought in by him in reverence of dethroned art.

CHAPTER VII

THE EMPIRE

1799-1814

TO read our pieces of Empire furniture aright, we must keep in mind the time and the events of which it was the decorative expression. It is a story full of absorbing interest — as the entire history of furniture always must be — from beginning to end, a story of man in his familiar life, man in his human intimacies.

In the three great periods of French decorative art, under the Great Louis, Louis the Well-Loved, and Louis XVI, we see a shorter Renaissance, one inspired by France, and extending thence to all Europe. As Italy had once been taken as the inspiration, so in these reigns did contemporary art turn to France for its models. Through its political conditions the country was ruled in every department by the reigning monarch and those he gathered about him. Court life involved poets and sages, diplomats and priests, and most powerful of all, the women who could not rule in name.

The furniture of those days speaks of all that brilliant horde, but it remained for Napoleon to so

concentrate interest in himself alone that the decorative art of his time seemed to express him alone. His powerful personality pervades all, and every piece of ormolu-mounted mahogany, every length of wreath-besprinkled, crude-coloured brocade, declares its imperial inspiration. The Empire period means Napoleon.

The change from one of the three preceding styles to another was, as we have seen, a gradual matter, one of gentle amity and the subtle flattering of the new monarch. "Your grandfather had that, you want something new," was the suggestion which has influenced others than kings to toss aside what was good in favour of what was novel.

But the change which came at the end of the old regime came through the hideous demolition by the Revolution, which sought to wash away the past with rivers of blood. The horrors are too well known to review, nor are they pertinent, except as showing cause for the disappearance of the treasures of art, the furniture *de luxe* that it had been the pleasure of kings to acquire and to place in the once safe harbour of palaces.

Louis XVI and his beautiful frivolous queen had been guillotined but a short time, when the mob took possession of all the monarch had owned as belonging to the new self-made government which was of the people. It was little wonder that a people so

long oppressed, so long accustomed to feel that only privation and labour were for them, lost reason and judgment with the bursting of palace gates. The treasures inside were to them eloquent of the indulgence of kings, — of kings grown so effete that even poor Marie Antoinette acknowledged it sadly in her comment on the miniature doll-house beauties of the Petit Trianon, calling the place appropriate "for such kings as we."

When the mob of the bourgeoisie looked about them at Versailles and other palaces, it is not surprising that bitterness overcame all feelings of admiration, and that virtuous retribution demanded the sacking and destroying of what had cost the people so much to supply. What were kings but men in that iconoclastic time, when respect for royalty had changed to such hatred that only the guillotine would serve it.

During the Directory came the demolition of the treasures of art. A body of men was appointed called a Jury of Arts and Manufactures. Even in those wild times the Latin love for beauty asserted itself so far as to consent to government patronage of the arts, or at least an acknowledgment that art was important enough to foster. But what fostering! Taste was guided by politics, and these were revolutionary.

The jury had for its object the inauguration of a new and glorious period in French decorative art

one that had nothing to do with kings, forsooth. Its first duty was to decide what of existing works were worthy of preservation. In this selection the element of taste was omitted, — a strange omission for matters of art, which has as first aim the desire to please. All that was characteristic of court life was to disappear.

The jury held sittings at which everything was judged, and thus decisions made as to what should be retained and what thrown to destruction. Without honour must this bourgeoise committee have been in making up its rules. Nothing was to be retained that was associated with royalty. Condemnation fell upon armorial bearings, royal and semi-royal, and these being a frequent device on tapestries and on metal work in silver and ormolu, elegant articles of this class were apportioned for destruction.

Cartoons of Raphael were thrown out as superstitious in subject by this wild jury, who also rejected all pictures and ornaments containing signs of feudalism, — that being a time of oppression of the people. In assorting tapestries, the combat of the Romans and Sabines was counted as worthy of preservation as an interesting subject, but one depicting the arrival of Queen Cleopatra in Silicia is censured as anti-republican. The tapestry which represented the visit of Louis XIV to the royal manufacture of the gobelins was promptly con-

demned, but the jury lamented over the damaged condition of a series by Coypel on the adventures of Don Quixote, because they are constrained to turn chivalry into ridicule. Finally, sketches for furniture, borders, etc., yet to be executed, were examined, and were all condemned as being in hopelessly bad taste.

And what became of the condemned? Alas, it was a day of beheading for man and of burning for his effects; "the ambition of the virtuous Republican recoiled from the gates of Heaven and was resolute to create a new artistic earth." In the court of the Gobelins factory a tree of liberty was erected, and in its shadow was made a bonfire such as has never been seen before. Its flames were fed on the condemned tapestries and furniture and cartoons which the jury had not thought worthy of preservation.

And what then? Plans for the decoration of a public building in Paris recommends a work which shows the type accepted and approved by the new order. It is described as an allegory of "Minerva sitting at the feet of the Law, handing to Hercules, who personifies Popular Force, the decree which abolishes the Vices of the Old Government, represented by Harpies. At sight of the Law the Vices take flight, and are replaced by the Virtues. Fame proclaims the Regeneration of France by publishing the Rights of Man and the Democratic Consti-

tution. Everywhere the figure of Minerva indicates the National Convention."

And so the new period began with the annihilation of the old, its tradition, design, and history. Politics governed taste and took the place of court patronage. But the leaders of social life had not taste to exercise control over those they employed.

Matters were at this point when Napoleon came up from the Italian wars and the Egyptian campaign, overthrew the Directory, and became First Consul. Artists and ébénistes had not died with the destruction of works of art. They still lived, and craved both fame and fortune. The times inspired them, and they had before them one of the greatest of opportunities, — empty palaces, and a man to please whose history was as picturesque as it was important.

Napoleon was made emperor, and as such appropriately took possession of the royal palaces, which had so recently been robbed of their fittings. To fill these with luxurious articles of use and beauty was the great opportunity. The precepts laid down by the committee on art which had made the bonfire at the Gobelins, and had written its imprisoning rules, had not now to be so closely followed. Instead, the theme was the great man of the hour and his picturesque exploits. There was not an event that was not reflected in some way on the decorations.

Indeed, a study of the furniture of the time re-

veals pictorially each campaign of the Little Corporal, the First Consul and the Emperor until the time of the paling of his star. It was but a few years — only thirteen — from obscurity to Elba, so the artists who served his will and his vanity worked fast at the creating of this new style in which Napoleon's mind dominated. That he deliberately composed the style is not to be considered, but it is undoubtedly the artists' interpretation of his desires.

And so it stands before us, marked with the characteristics of the man. It is not magnificent with the grandeur of the style of Louis XIV, but it is rich and dignified, finding strength in reserve rather than expression, and is never over-large. In these ways it resembles the emperor for whom it was composed. Luxury tending to effeteness is not shown, nor subtlety of line, but on simple construction is laid the embellishments which speak of martial conquest and civic success. Is this not characteristic of the man himself?

To examine critically the furniture of the time is to discover first of all its simplicity of construction, yet in what marked manner this departs from the style of Louis XVI. The construction of certain chairs is straight and severe, yet lacks almost all suggestion of its preceding style for one or two most noticeable reasons. Whereas in Louis' reign the chairs were carved, now the wood is for the most part plain, mounted in ormolu; then it was

gilded, now it is finished in its natural colour; then the back legs were straight in line with the back, now they curve slightly outward.

There is never any possibility of confusing the two styles, for one speaks of rose gardens, boudoirs, and playful intimacies, the other speaks of Rome and the imperial Cæsars. The spirit pervading each is wide apart.

Chairs of simple construction are small, and rely for beauty on the colour of the mahogany, the fineness of the mounts, and the elegance of the stuffs used for covering them. Larger chairs, though far from being over-large, show more variety through carving. But as though to keep clear of reminiscence of a style recently destroyed, the carving is structural and massive. A sweeping horn of plenty curves down into the arm, or the heads of rams or lions terminate them. Still more elaborate are the winged gryphons, whose decorative persons occupy all the space of a chair-arm and equally impressive are strange creatures with human heads and chest, shaft-like bodies, and one huge lion's foot resting on the floor to take the weight. Across the back is sometimes carved the suggestion of a pediment.

Tables were for the most part round, and consoles or pier tables rectangular. The tops were of marble, sometimes white, sometimes of an ugly slate colour, which might be called light black. The supports of the pier tables showed little imagination and were

the same as those used on such case-work as cabinets, bookcases, dressing-tables. Indeed, the cabinet-makers at this period consulted neither art nor service in this construction, which not only looks frail but is so in reality. The legs which hold the back are more than slighted, being but slats, and not too well joined. Those which present themselves for notice on the front, however, are dignified and elegant, cut into tapering shape, crowned with a female bust, finished with feet all of ormolu.

Round tables on the other hand have invariably supports of great interest, and incline toward three feet. A central pillar carved stands on three lions' paws, or from a three-cornered plinth rises three columns to support the table-top, with three carved feet on the floor. Tables both square and round, those of a high order of workmanship, are supported by carved gryphons resting on a shaped base, giving great elegance and dignity to the piece. Against this sort of work nothing can be said, for it is at all times and during all fashions pleasing to the cultivated taste.

In using mahogany with its bright rich surface, the French of that time were tempted to resume in part at least their old-time tradition of incrusting furniture rather than leaving the constructive wood in sight. Thus we find veneer in full force in the empire furniture, used where there was not the slightest reason for it, not to economise, but living

to a false tradition that thus could better effects be gained. In the writer's possession are a dressing-table and bureau of mahogany veneered on oak. At least this assists the longevity of the pieces, and gives a pleasing effect on opening the finely finished drawers.

Even chairs are veneered, and this must have been at great pains where pains were not necessary, for mahogany was plenty at that time, — the heavy Spanish or San Domingo mahogany. But of necessity all carvings were cut from the solid block.

It would scarcely be going too far to say that the Empire style depends for its beauty and its character on the bronze gilt mounts with which it is enriched. These are what mark the period above all other peculiarities, just as rococo curves mark the style of Louis Quinze. Furniture at that time was hardly to be found without them, but as a warning to the unwary it must be remembered that unscrupulous dealers now dress plain pieces with copied mounts to reap large profits from otherwise unsalable wares.

These mounts, perfect in chiselling, infinite in design, enriching in function, tell all the story of the man who made such astonishing history in the world and in the boudoir. They cry aloud the name of Napoleon and invest with his spirit every piece of the grandiose furniture of his time. Decorative art that had been reflecting the glory or effeminacy

of the three last kings, now reflected the glory of the First Consul and the Emperor.

His campaign into Egypt is not hard to find in ormolu, where it shows in sphinxes, in hieroglyphs, and stiff statues. Indeed, the very shapes of chairs are so exactly copied from the Egyptain that one found in recent excavations in the Nile country was at once dubbed " Empire." Strange anachronism!

The Italian campaign furnished the central thought for most of the decorations, for here was Rome, and Rome had harboured Cæsar, the hero Napoleon sought to emulate in uniting all civilisation under one head, one man, and that man himself. Rome of the Cæsars was taken as the decorative model, and classic became the ormolu mounts that decorated the new emperor's furniture.

The anthemium is seen everywhere and plays its part as variously as once did the acanthus, making a pretty terminal for almost any design. Favourite among all designs were the wreaths of bay, the wreath of the hero, crossed with the torch meant for the brand of victorious war, but alas, applicable as well to the flames of Moscow. Napoleon, superstitious in all things, may have thought of this in exile on that island where Thackeray looked for him from the ship with childish terror as the man who daily devoured three sheep and all the little boys he could get hold of.

Mounts for large surfaces showed an abundance

Fig. 60. EMPIRE CRADLE BELONGING TO THE KING OF ROME

Fig. 61. NAPOLEON'S BED

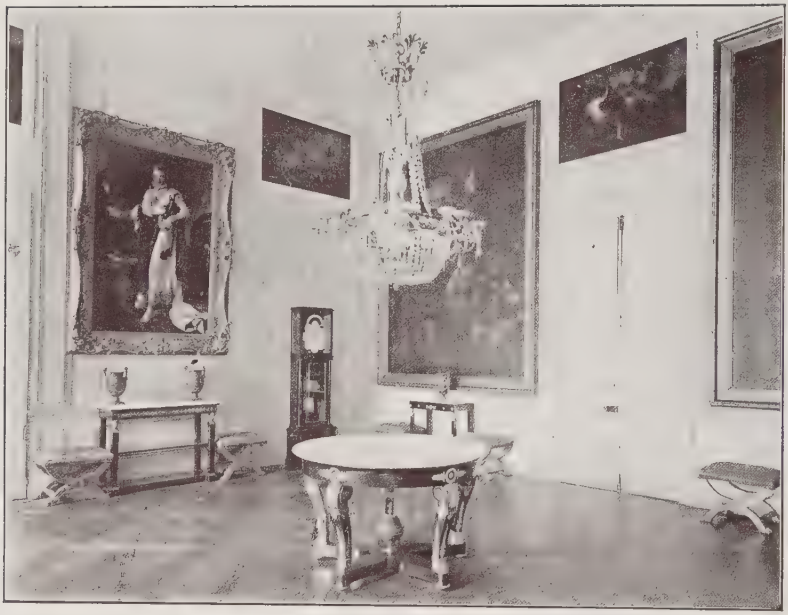


Fig. 62. APARTMENT OF NAPOLEON AT FONTAINEBLEAU

of floating female figures of a truly virtuous type, — something between a Roman matron and an angel, and not likely in any way to suggest the playful creations of past reigns. Independent mounts for crowning a pediment or a column, or even a cradle such as that which magnificently sheltered the pitiable boy we know romantically as l'Aiglon, represented a winged victory poised on a sphere. Amorini thus mounted figure in the same way with Pompeian suggestion.

The eagle, taken appropriately by Napoleon as one of his most inspiring of emblems, plays many a decorative part, finely chased in gilt-bronze. This noble bird keeps guard atop a fine cabinet which was one of Napoleon's wedding gifts to Marie Louise.

The letter N is used with as much importance as though the emperor had had exclusive use of it, used with the pride of the commoner exalted, who thus declares his scorn of royal armorial bearings. There is something appealing to the democrat in this frank declaration of obscurity brought to prominence through effort and worth. The letter stands alone surrounded with the victor's wreath, both formal, severe, eloquent.

Why Napoleon should take the bee as one of his symbols has many explanations. Perhaps the most reasonable has no foundation but romance, that he adopted it from a great family of Rome when Italy

fell before him, just as the Turks took their crescent from conquered Byzantium. No one can wander long in Rome without encountering the truly majestic Barberini bee, and it is this over-sized insect with spread wings that is now called the Napoleon bee.

A favourite design is the Roman fasces, the bound sticks with an axe in the centre, for all is martial at this time; and the Phrygian liberty cap still suggests freedom to the people who had not yet waked to the idea that they were being worse bled by wars than before the Revolution.

Metal was used as flat inlay in simple strips, but is not often seen. Perhaps the most beautiful creations of this time that are left us are the candelabra after Pompeian models. These are small for mantels or tables, but stand from the floor to an exaggerated height, resting on a tripod, and are as exquisitely perfect as art and patience and skill could make them.

The beds of the period are interesting in their variety, and approach more nearly the modern type, in that the poles disappear, and with them the canopy. To compensate, a generous amount of wood is shown, and this, of course, is richly mounted. The shape of beds is compact, solid, box-like, with no difference in the height of head and foot, and often made with a bolster roll at each end.

Stuffs at this time took on strong crude colours,

and stiff drawing. All the subtleties of fine flowers, love-knots, little baskets, with their infinite variety of colouring, were cast out, and by way of contrast there were plain surfaces sparsely sprinkled with formal designs of classic line. The colours ran largely to a strong rich green, neither too yellow nor too blue, but just the right tone to harmonise with the almost barbaric magnificence of the bronze-gilt mounts and glossy wood. Red, in the deep bright tone found in the heart of rare rubies, was a favourite, and blue of the tone known even now as Marie Louise.

The name of the artist which comes first to mind in thinking on those who helped to direct art in this time of quick change is David, whom we identify by his familiar picture of Madame Récamier reclining on an affectedly delicate and uncomfortable sofa. It is interesting to know that his education was pursued in Italy — thus being fitted to design after the antique. It is also noteworthy that he served under Louis XVI, but turned against him in the Revolution, and was ready to worship whatever strange gods the times might produce.

The names of Charles Percier and Pierre Fontaine are those, however, which are most closely associated with the applied arts. They were men of sufficient talent to direct the decorations of the Opera House in Paris, and to erect the Arc de Triomphe du Carrousel. Percier also built the

Madeline and the Bourse, and finished the Louvre.

But it is as designers of furniture and decorations that they are most useful to us. Percier, through friendship with Canova, had close Italian affiliations, and Fontaine took the Prix de Rome, which gave him a course of study in that city. Thus were both equipped to copy and invent after the classic style. In 1812 they together published a book of designs under the name, " Recueil des Decorations Interieur." These designs were all of them executed for persons of distinction, many of them — the imperial throne — being for Napoleon himself. It can only be said of these artists that their elegance is such that were one prejudiced against the Empire style as being gaudy and inartistic, he must re-form his judgment or limit it to some of the poor pieces exploited by dealers. As Percier and Fontaine presented the style, and as their pieces still preserved attest, it represents a union of Greek beauty and modern comfort.

At least the style refutes the accusation that this period represents, not art, but only glory.

CHAPTER VIII

ELIZABETHAN OR TUDOR STYLES
SIXTEENTH CENTURY

SOVEREIGNS, HENRY VIII, EDWARD, MARY, ELIZABETH

THE so-called Elizabethan styles in England — are they not the English reflection of the Renaissance?

We have seen the awakening in Italy, and followed the progress of the thrill as it agitated France. We have now to see its effect on English decorative art. Henry VIII was on the throne while Italy was intellectually and artistically active, and Elizabeth succeeded him. Tudor styles, therefore, might the product of that age be called, but with all chivalry they are named after the lady, although for that matter they began before her reign and lasted after it.

Elizabethan styles have been designated as a debased Renaissance; perhaps with some show of reason, but the term wounds the *amour propre* of those who love the old English, and who see in it not only good taste and satisfying elegance, but

also a firmness of character which is not disassociable from the British nation and the British individual.

The English interpretation of the Renaissance may be called characteristic, but surely not debased. It is merely another one of those interesting illustrations of individuality that reward the student of applied arts. The character of a people as well as of the individuals must leave its impress on all its tangible productions. Set a sketch class before the same view, and one member will produce a gay canvas, one a serious, while another will conventionalise with pre-Raphaelite stiffness. And so the English in their way interpreted the art of the day according to temperament.

That it was an imported art is a matter of history, — very interesting history to the collector. No reproaches are to be cast at the nation who had to import her art. In the first place, she had already an art, a novelty from abroad was what she was importing, just as nations and people have ever imported them to please that fickle master, the eye, which is ever tiring of oft-repeated shapes. The famous Bayeux Tapestry surely is rich in artistic value as well as instruction, and if furniture previous to the Tudors is all gone to dust, at least in architecture are evidences of a beauty that had no need of superseding.

It is true that England did not wake divinely as

Fig. 63. ELIZABETHAN CHIMNEY-PIECE
(Now at Hartford, Conn.)

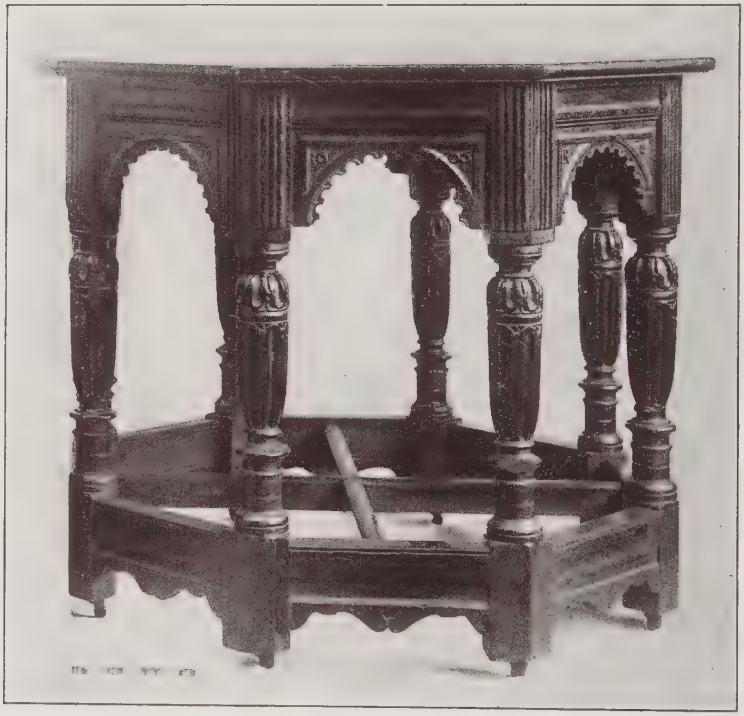


Fig. 64. ELIZABETHAN TABLE

did Italy, for the circumstances were all different. Italy was in the very centre of art. Travelling was difficult and dangerous in days when hostility was the rule of nations and murder the amiable intent of a stranger's greeting. England was far away, and an island to boot, while Italy was set near the opulent East, near Byzantium, with its mixed art of Christian and Turk, and holding within its own peninsular the perfection of Greek and Roman remains. To the world of nowadays it seemed that she awoke as Venus arose from the sea, — radiant, perfect, vital, exquisite, — but in truth she had been long in preparation through the aid of unknown and unsung "early men," and by virtue of her own atmosphere, where Nature herself with sweet insistence demands that man shall understand her, and understanding, shall interpret.

And how was it in England? Wars and rumours of wars, conflicts without and within, preceded by feudal times so benumbing to all but the lords of the land that the people knew nothing and cared less of the useless matter called art, that they could neither eat nor be clothed with, nor did they find in it a refuge from a too rigorous climate.

That lusty Tudor, Henry VIII, we are apt to think of him as a man of wide waist, of slant-set velvet hat, and of implacable choler, whose sleeves were slashed with velvet and whose reign was slashed with the shrieks of his espoused. Perhaps

the same desire for novelty that caused him to seek such frequent matrimonial change, caused his fretful eye to long for other lines of decoration than those which satisfied England at that time — for we must take this wife-murderer humorously, or be speedily a-crying for the poor young martyrs of London Tower.

However it was, the king wanted some of the tender beauties of the Continent brought to his island, and so invited certain artists from Italy and France to come and execute the royal pleasure. To-day is the time of the people, par excellence, so that it is hard to think of an entire nation awaiting the move of its chief for a change in its decorative arts. But things were different when the bluff king could cry, "Off with his head!" as easily as to ask for his fiddlers three, and initiative was a dangerous plant nipped in the bud by the frost of tyranny.

So the glory of the importation and encouragement of the art of the Renaissance rests with the king, and we discover that the matter was not one of natural growth, but forced, an exotic deliberately transplanted from a foreign soil. And as grapes make wine according to the land in which they are planted, so the fruit of this Italian vine altered its flavour beyond the chalk cliffs.

Artists were for sale in those days at very high figures, for Henry VIII was far from being the only monarch envious of the inspired handicraft of

Italy, and determined that his country should produce its equal. But opposition only determined the man, and he had his way.

The importance of this act of royalty cannot be over-estimated, for its influence was revolutionary and its results excite our wonder and delight to-day. Not all at once was the change effected, but from the early influence have developed the beautiful designs of later men. Who that has walked on the Strand has not turned riverward to contemplate the rich beauty of the stone water-gate erect on the embankment by Inigo Jones and Nicholas Stone? And who has not been led to feel the force and integrity of the English reflections of the Renaissance in Whitehall?

Because Henry was a doughty Protestant, the new art appealed to him as being entirely at variance with the vogue of the hated Papists, which was very naturally Gothic, that being the only sacred architecture in England before Martin Luther, the young monk, went on his famous errand to Rome and returned a vehement Protestant against the materialism he found rampant there. And as Protestantism had a bitter and relentless hatred then, perhaps the new arts flourished more quickly in England because of the king's desire to blot out the evidence of the opposing religion.

Of examples remaining there are but few, and these, alas, are only available to the traveller, for they cannot leave England. Almost every piece of

furniture of the time of Bluff King Hal is snugly tucked away in museums, where it is no longer allowed to earn a right to exist by supporting the weight of man or his belongings, but is passing a conspicuous and honoured old age of indolence. But these rare examples give us a very fair idea of the kind of homes and the comforts in them which prevailed among the well-to-do in the days of the Renaissance in England.

As for comfort — perhaps the word is too strong considering all it means of springs and cushions to the modern. Even the sybarites among the people of those days knew less of comfort in the home than does our modern mechanic in his flat or cottage. It was a time when blankets were a luxury, when even queens' apartments were rush-strewn instead of carpeted, that the cold of wintry floors might be mitigated. And times were not much if any better when the fascinating widow of the French king, Francis II, came shivering to the hardships of Holyrood Castle to rule the Scots.

The English took quickly the idea of beauty, even though ease to the body seems to have had slight part in it — although if our bones ache for sympathy with these uncomfortable folk we can fancy that cushions which have long since been devoured by that grim guest, the moth-worm, then played a prolific part in furnishing. Surely such softening were needed for the asperities of high-relief carving on a straight

wooden chair-back and a hard wooden seat. Comfort must, however, have been known in the sumptuous bed of the time which towers with importance over all other furniture of England of that day. But with its four tall posts and tester, is it not a copy of the Italian fashion?

Until the time when the Stadtholder William introduced Dutch lines into English households, the Italian influence held, but its best expression was its earliest. The reason is patent. The artists and architects which Henry imported began the good work, made models, struck the note. But it was too high a strain for the English craftsmen of the time to keep. And so the change came, as when a teacher sets a copy in the writing book and the child copies it well at first, but as it grows more distant his imitation is more feeble, until at the end of the page he is but copying his own efforts. So with these designs; for this is the difference, whereas the Italian drew to express the art that was in him, his British followers were but learning a new trick. The *spirit* was not present, and so the manner failed.

Compare for proof of this difference the spontaneous foliage of the Italian with that of the English designer. The former artist dances ecstatically through his task with a rhythm that is the song of an inspired spirit. In his work is the grace of Nature, the nice perfection of Greece, all made vital with the sprightliness of the hour. Surely the gay god Pan

must have laughed and piped in the artist's ear all the while he drew his exquisite shapes which we describe as foliated scrolls.

As we have seen, the Italian, who was in those days art-vitalised, set the copy for the Briton. He drew designs which were executed under his care, and these are (unflattering as is the reflection) the choicest examples of Tudor or Elizabethan work. Let us reflect, however, for the relief of those who dislike to have Italy set above Britain even in the matter of foliated scrolls, that the astonishing and prolific of the Cinque Cento turned for their inspiration to those perfect masters, the Greeks. The closer the Greek detail and motive was adhered to, the more exquisite the work of the Renaissance in Italy. Of course they played upon these motifs, infusing into them their own individuality as a musician makes variations on a theme, but the air was borrowed from the Greeks.

Having thus consoled ourselves with the thought that borrowing art is all in the way of progress, and that the best masters thus find inspiration, let us examine a little into the differences that began to appear in England after the Italians had returned to their sunny hills and left the island workmen to their own devices.

The result was the same as when a teacher leaves the schoolroom. The wits scattered because they were no longer co-ordinated. The method was for-

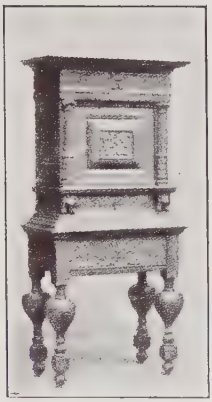


Fig. 65. RENAISSANCE
CABINET, FLANDERS

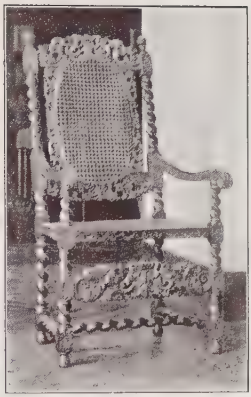


Fig. 66. CHAIR
FLEMISH RENAISSANCE

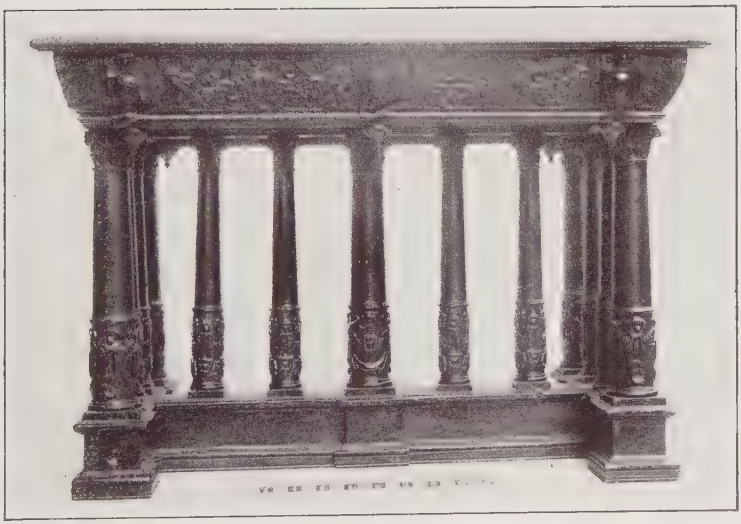


Fig. 67. ELIZABETHAN TABLE

Fig. 68. FLEMISH CHAIR, XVII CENTURY

gotten, and the spirit had flown. The hand cramped with Gothic stiffness and conventionally was not free to originate spontaneous lines of grace. It fell naturally again into conventionality, for its cunning had never been developed. The carving which sparkles with a bright atmosphere of its own creating, it was not theirs to produce. At the bottom of it all lay the fact that it was not their natural expression. And so it died, or rather it altered into something else which better suited the English craftsman.

And thus there came about the style which is known as Jacobean. And this, too, is the logic (for nothing in the world is more logical than the history of furniture and decoration) of what might cause wonder, the superiority of the earlier style. The symmetry of the form in early work, the harmony of each panelled wall or piece of furniture, is missed in the later work.

As an illustration, take the beautiful use of columns, pilasters and arches on work of the early English Renaissance. They are as inspiring as the doorway to a temple — and not unlike them in miniature. The lines are bold and true, the relief is high. The same idea grows flat in the Jacobean days which succeeded; it is still beautiful, for an arch thrown over columns can scarce be murdered, but it loses the architectural feeling which adds so much of dignity to panelling and to furniture forms, and becomes a

mere flat plaything of the chaser's tool, a surface on which to chip leaves or " repeats."

It is among the things to consider in the Elizabethan period that turning came so freely into vogue. Contrast a chair turned work with one of Gothic construction and it will be seen that a change so radical could not have occurred without outside influence. In one case the wood is used in decorated planks, with excessive heaviness as a result. In the other is all lightness in construction. And how did this come? In the same old way that I repeat as often as the funny man of opera bouffe repeats his catch word — from the Italian.

The ruler of riches was much the same in those days as now, that is, he was the enviable exception who had them, so for the ordinary household furniture less magnificent pieces had to be provided. Turned work filled the need. Under the English hand it grew more important and swelled into bulbous members of prodigious obesity — especially when the influence of the Netherlands rushed in like a tidal wave — but of that later. In the beginning the turning was a simple graceful twist easy to trace to its Saracenic source, but Northern fancy played on it as on a pipe of many frets.

The decoration called strap-work is too characteristic of this period to pass unnoticed. It is in design any graceful arrangement of line and scroll, but its peculiarity lies largely in the manner of cutting.

The pattern has a flat surface of equal height, from which the background is cut evenly away, very much as though straps of ribbon were arranged to form a design. It is one of the points to notice on Elizabethan work.

To gain an idea of the extreme elegance of English interiors of the Renaissance, wander some day when in London down to the sweetly pensive neighbourhood of the Charterhouse. Coax, command or buy any one who is near to leave you quite alone that your spirit may be in gentle receptive mood, and then from the quaint old courtyard enter the Hall where for hundreds of years the spirit of things has not changed. The marvellous old room is silent and subdued in its grey London light, its floor is bare, its benches and tables are frankly unsoftened by textiles, but over it all broods the great Elizabethan screen of scrolled black oak. Here indeed is a place to dream, a place in which to fancy men in rich doublets and hose, women sparkling in weight of elegance, a merry hearty crowd of ghosts which pass out and leave you alone — but for the gentle and more modern company of Colonel Newcome before he said his final "adsum."

What must have been the interior of a gentleman's house in those days of prodigal elegance, and what my lady's chamber? To make a mental picture of it, fancy a wall panelled to the top like the satisfying Renaissance work of Sizergh Castle, dark with age,

reflecting with the polish which comes from the touch of many careful hands, making a background dignified and reposeful as the tormented modern could wish, "instinct with poetry of its own and a quiet charm which is the essence of decorative content."

Or, if you like, in this imaginary picture of an Elizabethan bedroom fancy the wall tapestry-hung, "for old tapestries are such stuff as dreams are made of, and they are peopled with the forms that sweep the melancholy ways of sleep." This room is lighted from a lattice window in a deep embrasure, and holds furniture fit for its beauty, a carved armoire, a heavy table, but best of all a bed which is an enchanted castle of sleep, where one may give himself over to unconsciousness or the celestial irresponsibility of dreams — throughout all the enchanted dark to purple twilight — and wake to harmonious surroundings which breathe a benison on the waking day.

From imported architects and workers we turn with the alluring prejudices of race to the appreciation of Inigo Jones. He was the first English artist to reflect the classic in all its purity, and with our fondness for patronymic we have called him the father of the English classical revival in architecture. He was the first native artist to throw away every vestige of Gothic and produce something that spoke of the country's quick advance in the arts of peace.

It was not enough that he drew inspiration from

Fig. 69. · CHAIR, FLEMISH RENAISSANCE

the Italian in his country, although that was by no means meagre, for not only were the imported artists at work, but gentlemen were bringing over carved mantels and other details for the interiors of some of the famous English country houses. But Inigo Jones took the journey to Italy, a journey requiring much courage and resolution before steam motors. And having gone there he stayed, poring over the old Roman ruins, drinking in every line, every detail, becoming saturated with the art which we call classic. To have been born and educated with the eyes on Gothic designs, and then to open them on another world of art, the adapted art of Greece, was the wonderful stimulating experience of Inigo Jones.

Back he travelled to his country with prolific pencil and eager inspiration, and produced those fine departures from the art of the Middle Ages that make a sharp distinction between the old and the modern.

In architecture the classic may be called the universal language, true, rich, adaptable, capable of describing any thought whether individual or national. Inigo Jones made the classic interpret the English feeling. And thus the English Renaissance speaks in the language of Greek and Roman art, using it as the vehicle for her own peculiarities.

Inigo Jones left many examples of his work in celebrated palaces and houses. A study of them shows the Roman heaviness and rich ornamentation, especially in mantels and doors. The absence of large

mirrors in over-mantels is accounted for by the inadequate methods of glass manufacture, but paintings, usually portraits, took their place and were majestically framed with carvings and topped with a heavy pediment. The variety of these pediments is infinite, but all unite in being massive.

The doorways of Inigo Jones invite, yet check advance. So elegant are they that one knows not whether to pass through them inspired by royal suggestion, or to stop and absorb their rich symmetry. They are like temple doors and suggest the presence of glorious things beyond. Flanked with fluted columns they uphold a pediment of Greek purity, and within this elegant frame is sunk the door and its carved over-panel.

The styles of the time were all heavy, could scarce have been otherwise when architects studied temples for inspiration, but the domestic architecture then produced is the joy of the modern traveller who is so fortunate as to see it in Chatsworth, in Greenwich, and in Whitehall. Columns abound, and where this is the case and the designer knows the alphabet of the "five orders," there is always grandeur and harmony.

CHAPTER IX

JACOBEAN

PERIOD 1603-1689. SOVEREIGNS, JAMES I, CHARLES I, CROMWELL, CHARLES II, JAMES II

AND now having proceeded with our studies in chronological order, we reach the second period of the Renaissance in England, a period essentially native. The shackles of the Italian masters were slipped off, and with hands free to express thought actually the decorative artists produced something peculiarly their own. As was the custom, the style was not named for its originators, but for the house that occupied the throne during its growth. So we call this decorative period Stuart or Jacobean.

The end of the Tudor period is placed at 1603. Inigo Jones lived and worked for forty years after that arbitrary boundary. His ideas were not changed at the death of the sovereign, but continued to work in the style called Palladian — after the great Italian architect of the Renaissance. For this reason it is not possible to make clear division between styles Tudor and styles Jacobean, according to the calendar.

In architecture and in interiors the grandiose classic adaptation prevailed in Jacobean times, as in Tudor, with an inclination toward repression as time went on, and, also, certain exaggerations. But even into the Queen Anne period these general principles prevailed in all large houses and interiors. Homes had not grown quietly comfortable, but were temple-like in grandeur, their halls an echo of the ancient porticoes where the Greeks discussed philosophy. A liberal use of fluted columns and pilasters enriched every stair and hall and large chamber. An elegant heaviness was sought, given by the lavish use of oak, in architectural effect. Unspeakably imposing are these interiors now, these magnificent reminders of England's Renaissance, but all impossible to imitate, for time gives a touch which is available to no other artist.

In these superb rooms, amid the columns and carvings and set against the panelled wainscots, was the Jacobean furniture. No other style can be of such great interest to Americans, for the first furniture that came to our colonies was this, and the first that was copied by our own struggling cabinet-makers was this, which fact alone makes it worth our while to study it carefully.

Furniture and architecture are correlated, the same men designing both interiors and their fittings, yet the Jacobean furniture strays further from the Italian inspiration than does the larger work. It faintly

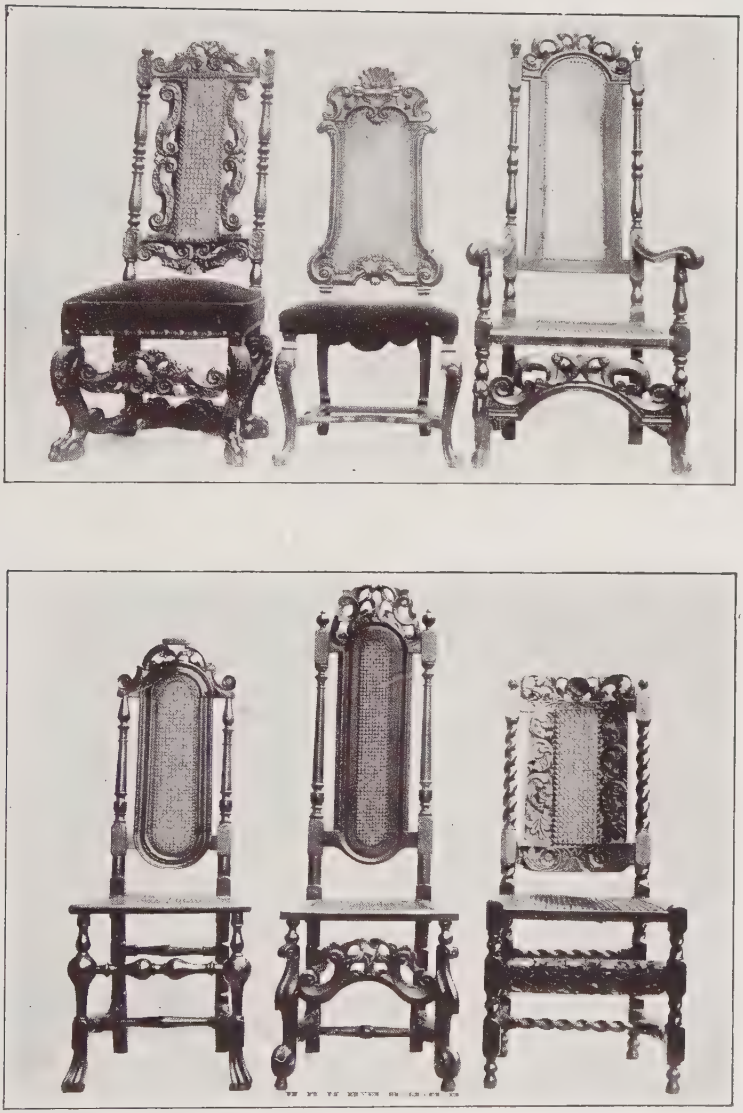


Fig. 70. JACOBEAN CHAIRS (FLEMISH INFLUENCE)

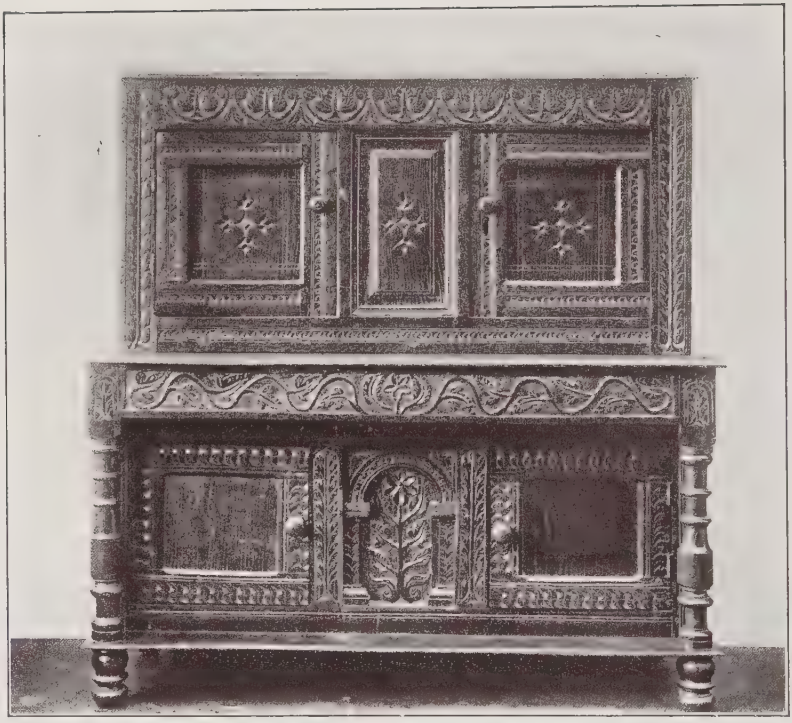


Fig. 71. JACOBEAN CUPBOARD

echoes the Italian furniture, but is done with a less certain touch, and finally wanders away on its own devices.

The chests of oak, the square cupboards which hid unhonoured under farmhouse rafters of New England for perhaps two hundred years, are now recognised as Jacobean, and with this proud title are dragged into conspicuousness, and loved for their power to speak of the men of other days. For years we scarce knew what they were, these box-like pieces of oak furniture so unlike the mahogany-and-haircloth, the black-walnut-and-reps, through whose presumptuous usurpation they banished. "A strange carved chest in the attic — I consider it very handsome," I remember hearing a lady say with taste and daring in the days when all old furniture was hopelessly out of the mode, and was universally condemned to attic darkness. Where would we be now, speaking as collectors, if houses had been constructed without attics!

That we may never pass over unrecognised a bit of Jacobean stuff brought over in the early days, we must study it in its English purity before colonial joiners locally altered it.

First let us look at construction, an ever important matter. Carpenter-built is the description that comes involuntarily to the mind. Joiners were young in art, and safety lay in simplicity, so subtleties were left to decoration and not outline. In chairs and tables the legs were straight, and took the weight squarely.

The backs of chairs, too, rose straight from the flat seat in an uncompromising directness, which must have tortured all spines but the strongest.

Chests had a natural right to rectangular construction, but these seemed to emphasise the box-like drawing, and even disdained playing a few tricks with decorative feet, like claws, etc. Tables were like shallow boxes set on legs, and cupboards were like large ones. It was a time when the worker evidently started with an oaken plank and was loath to destroy its original aspect. Strange, that the effect should so please the eye of to-day, the eye that seeks not only beauty for itself, but comfort for the body that supports it.

When we come to the enrichment, that is another matter. What the makers lacked in curves when constructing, they atoned for in decoration, and for that we bless them — although no one can find fault with the good taste of the forms.

In general the work was carved, and it is by this carving that we can best learn to recognise the Jacobean pieces. The shape is not the only thing, as was shown by a lady who prides herself on her knowledge of American antiques and who owns many. When calling on a friend who has nested in an abandoned farm she fell with enthusiasm upon a beautiful carved oak chest, and worshipped as appropriately as the extreme importance of a Jacobean piece demanded. The article was a chest, a square box supported on

stiles or legs of one piece with the sides, and the whole was rendered elegant with flat carving.

But alas, for her discernment, she had neglected to learn by heart the designs of the Jacobean carver, and the ancient oak before which she was swinging the censor of her appreciation was none other than a piece of Brittany handiwork, carved last year after the old fashion of that interesting corner of France and stained to the semblance of age. Perhaps it may help some one to observe just here that many of these attractive carvings of Brittany smack strongly of Gothic detail which, as we have seen, was unpopular in England at the inception of the Renaissance. As the Jacobean carvings were not descended or evolved from these Gothic models they were entirely distinct from the pointed style with its endless combinations of the significant trefoil and quatrefoil. In Breton figure carving the sabots prevent confusion with the English.

To begin with, the Jacobean furniture-maker started with a wide flat surface for his carving, and as much as possible retained this level, cutting and gouging not too deeply, and rarely rounding his surfaces as in Elizabethan work. This applies to panels, chair-backs, and wide surfaces, but rarely to legs of pieces, as these were usually turned. The relief was low and, therefore, missed somewhat of the elegance seen at that time on the Continent. It was conservative, self-restrained, perhaps a little cold, but it

pleased the people for whom it was made, for it had a Northern asceticism more admired than the voluptuous fulness of the South. Perhaps temperament regulated and stiffened the hand, but more than that crudeness was a sign of the times. The people of England knew little then of the finer side of life, and in manners and morals were not such people as the Englishman of to-day would care to welcome to his hearth or drawing-room. And the consolation for all such reflections is that it is better to belong to a nation that can see itself improving than to one whose glory lies dead these many hundreds of years.

The details of the Jacobean carvings that we must learn — what are they? Two or three are actual hall-marks, and are easily learned. One is a series of circles forming a running pattern adaptable to almost any piece of furniture. These circles are made detached, or tied together with a straight bar, or formed by a graceful serpentine meander. The latter is most interesting because it enables one to recognise the species — it is a copy of the Roman guilloche, revived by the Italian Renaissance, imported to England, and suffering variations under the tools of local carvers.

This design outlines many a panel, and when enlarged and broken into sections, is made to do duty as the central ornament of smaller panels. In this case it sometimes appears arranged in a quatrefoil, sometimes like twins side by side.

Fig. 72. JACOBEAN CHEST

Fig. 73. A—JACOBEAN TABLE
B—GATE-LEGGED JACOBEAN TABLE

Another form of which liberal and varied use is made is the semicircle filled with leafage or with long petals, which leads one to liken it to half a daisy sunk within a protecting encircling line. It bears a close resemblance to the later developments which we call shells and rising suns. It is among the most ambitious of the running patterns and takes space to execute, so is found on chests, cupboards and tables, but rarely on chairs. Small designs were a repetition of slanting gouges which roughly indicated a spiral, or little crescent-shaped digs of the tool, which broke up a long unornamented space or a moulding.

The double scroll, foliated and plain is so oft repeated that its carvers must have been enamoured of this adaptable device. We know what it was in the hands of inspired artists — but we must also admire its interpretation as given by these men of practicality. Tied together it makes a " repeat " adaptable to any length to be ornamented; and used singly, the foliations elaborated, it fills a panel. In the Northern land it lost in softness, in succulence, but it took on an aspect of interest to the student; it developed a neat hardness which is characteristic of designs of all Northern peoples. If it lacked sparkling piquancy, at least it retained grace, and this quality endears it. If it loses in richness, it gains the beauty of attenuation.

A simple, almost childish design is doubtless an

inartistic use of the curling acanthus, but is at best a weak, flat attempt. Still, it is not to condemn that we examine it, only to regard it as a help in knowing the designs of that time.

It remains to mention a design which is a favourite where square panels are to be ornamented, a design enormously interesting to those who like the fun of running a fox to his hole. It is not my purpose to do this, but to call attention to the design as England liked it in these days. In general it resembles an arched entrance to an edifice. Two uprights resting on a pedestal support an arch. Most happily is this used on a cupboard door, for then architecture seems to come to the pleasant assistance of the smaller trade as when a lion graciously helps a mouse. And just as happily is the design applied to the head board of a great temple of an oaken bedstead, for here it is like the reredos of an altar, most fit for the reception of mighty petitions and promising divine protection throughout the hours of darkness.

But without appropriateness the backs of arm-chairs are treated in this way. It must have been to the utter discomfiture of those who for fear of rheumatism never turn the back to an open doorway.

Of inlaying I have not yet spoken, for low relief was the leading characteristic of this period, but this design of columns and arch (how can one refrain from speaking of their Roman and Lombardy origin?) is found in inlay as well as in carving, executed

in holly and other light woods. This treatment admitted of an elaboration too recondite for the carver, an effect of far perspection given by repeating the design in even smaller size, one within the other.

In its purity this is one of the subtlest of both Elizabethan and Jacobean motifs, for it partakes of the qualities of the intellect; but, alas for the taste for novelty, which has ever been the fell destroyer of perfection. The pranks which were played with the uprights robbed them of strength, and dispelled the illusion of firm and capable columns. They lost their look of solidity and became mere flat surfaces on which to lay a floral or scroll design. The arch loses less in maltreatment, for it still retains its wide, full sweep like the top of a dignified doorway, although it suffers by means of a double scroll decoration continued from the uprights.

To see this design in the full of its forceful value, it must be found on a piece of furniture or a mantel where it is used with logical intent, the purpose of the pillars being really to support something. This is seen on tables, the columns forming the legs, and the arches carrying the weight of the table top. It is also seen on open chair-backs, and on court cupboards.

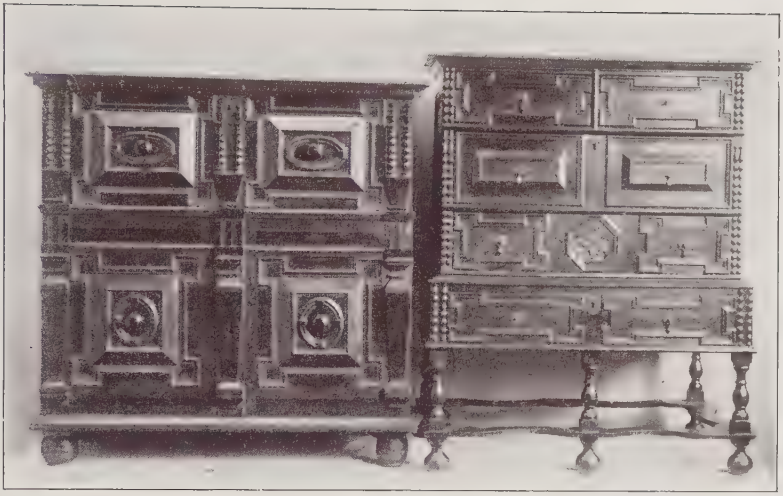
Characteristic of this time as well as of the Elizabethan is the carving known as strap-work, to which allusion has been made before. It comes entirely within the manner of the English worker of those

days, their practice of keeping surfaces flat and low, a practice which is one of the distinguishing marks. The Jacobean and Elizabethan have much in common, but are perfectly distinguishable by this flattening and we might say cheapening of all carved surfaces.

So far we have taken no note of the introduction of Flemish styles, which are so markedly different as to seem to belong to another era. From Flanders came another infusion of the warm blood of the Renaissance. It seemed to preserve its vitality better than in England, and so came over again in Flemish form.

In chairs the change was very marked. The appearance of being made from decorated planks was destroyed by the free introduction of pierced carved work of a rich and artistic order, and by turning. The beauty of these chairs it is hard to overpraise, notwithstanding the fact that they are not regarded as comfortable asylum for those addicted to naps in their hours of ease. That being true, and yet one being able to own an original and several copies, these chairs make the ideal furnishing for a modern dining-room.

Earlier Jacobean chairs were of the variety known as wainscot chairs, the name coming obviously from the shape of the back, which might have been a panel lifted from a decorated wall of those days, so like is it to a section of the wondrous shadowy walls which made rich shelter to the folk of those days who are to



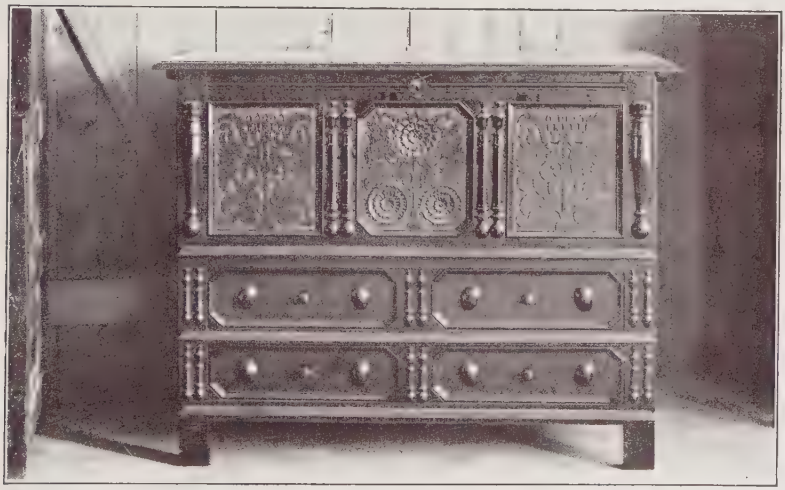


Fig. 74. A—JACOBEAN CUPBOARD AND CHEST OF DRAWERS
B—AMERICAN JACOBEAN CHEST

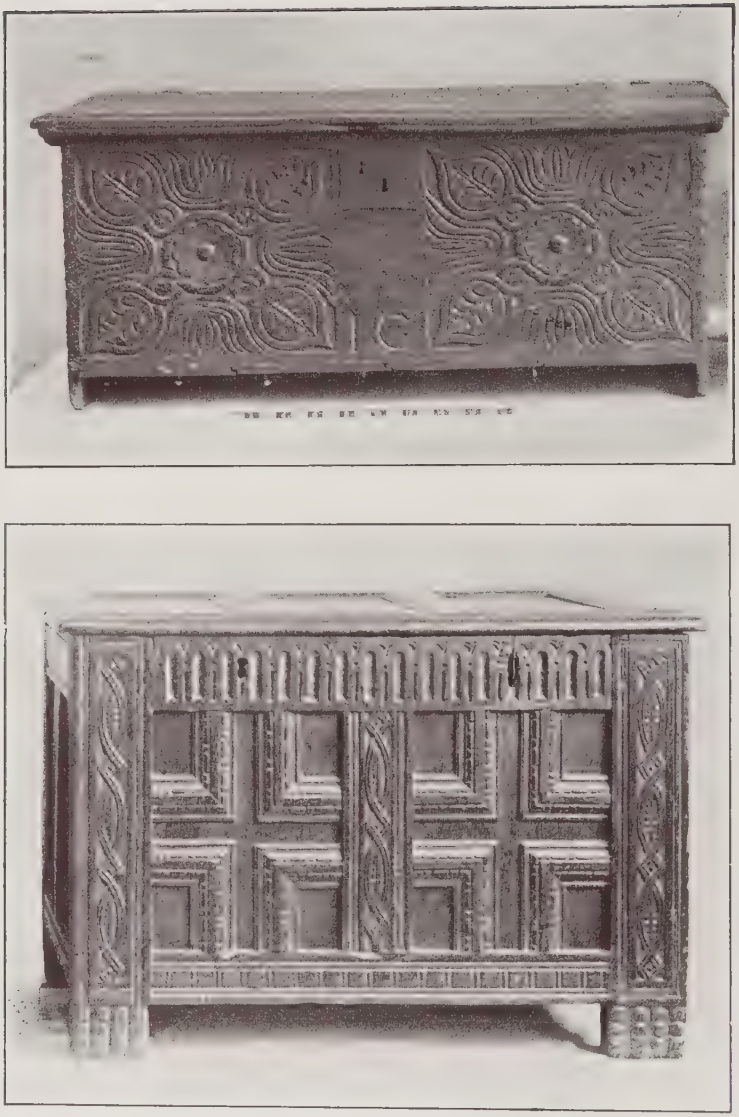


Fig. 75. JACOBEAN CHESTS

us glorified by the light of romance. The ornamented back standing with uncompromising rigidity, ready to impress its carved elaborations upon the tender, tired flesh that sought repose upon it, this back was given further decorative value by the simplicity of the seat, a mere polished flat plank, at right angles to the perpendicular back. Arms were straight and vigorous, legs preserved unerring honesty of direction, and altogether the chair was frank, honest and well-balanced, showing without shame its ancestry of oaken plank and stick.

Altogether different was the later Jacobean chair copied from the Lowlands, which got it from Spain, when those two countries were associated under Emperor Charles V and his descendants. This latter chair showed often the slender, twisted column — but not by that alone can its origin be rightly traced, for Italy and France were also building this graceful spiral support into the furniture of their Renaissance. Just what determines it is so fine a matter that even the most astute of collectors have been known to miscall a piece or else to fall back upon the *ipse dixit* of a dealer.

It is the indefinite something which forms the personality of the chair just as indefinable charm envelops certain individuals. In general the designs of Italian, Flemish and English chairs of the type we are considering are closely analogous, but a careful study of many pieces will produce a keenness in rec-

ognition. You cannot associate yourself with them without learning to know them, just as by contact one learns to know individuals, and it is needless to say each has a charm peculiar to itself. The Italian chair shows the best workmanship, as though its maker had been loath to let it go from his caressing hand, adding daily some greater perfection, until the wood seems sentient and the colour underrun with life. The design, too, is more complete, rounding itself into a perfect whole as symmetric as a sonnet. There is no abruptness, no expediency, but all is carefully planned with a poetic mind and finished with the hand of grace.

The Flemish plays a close second, only losing when running into over-elaboration. A revel of enrichment always suggests weakness, and lack of symmetry, as though a fundamental fault in proportion were covered by rich draping. Rich scrolls carved with a high surface rising almost to an angle played many parts in the chairs, and in time were used in a way that scrolls had never before been used, that is, as legs. Previous to this time a rigid perpendicularity had prevailed, but now began the new order. But as we have already seen, all things of the Renaissance turn back to the antiquity of Rome and Greece, which in turn had succeeded in art the Egyptian. So we cannot claim for Flanders, nor for any other modern country, the original adoption of the scroll as a support, but we may see in it the beginnings

of those later styles which developed in each country according to its kind.

The English chair, the later Jacobean, is as true in its artistic development as that of the other countries. Like them especially in grace and a lightness that contrasted agreeably with the solid immovability of the earlier chairs.

This effect of lightness was mainly given by the open backs, which were composed of a panel of carving framed with two distant columns of turned work. Besides this, cane and rush took the place of wood in both seat and back, and this was often upholstered with cushions of tapestry. But as the rigidity of the Reformation was the paramount feeling at this period of history, an indefinable effect of inflexibility is given to the product of the hand, and even in a carving of scroll, some angles are shown, just enough to protest against too voluptuous an art.

Before leaving the wonderful richness of Jacobean carvings and old black oak, consider for a moment the gate-legged table, for a specimen is occasionally to be found, to delight the eye and to accommodate the hand. It is round or oblong, having around the top a border of the half-circle ornamentation, lightly cut, and its distinguishing feature of two drop leaves supported on moveable gates. The eight legs are symmetrically turned and under-framed. Another style of gate-legged table has but one drop leaf, and employs the Spanish foot.

The so-called wing chair, Shakespeare chair, and Stuart chair, all belong to this period, but as they belong more distinctly to other styles, from which they were borrowed, they are considered elsewhere. Let it be sufficient here to say that the Shakespeare chair with its wide seat, narrow back, and wide, semi-circular arms, came to England through Flanders, and the Stuart chair came from France, a product of the Renaissance in that country.

And why did these things come, these waifs from other countries? The answer is found in that part of history that tells of Elizabeth's interference in Spain's tyrannous subjugation of the Netherlands, and in Marie Stuart's desire to surround herself with the familiar household gods of the country she left for Scotland's turbulence and Elizabeth's surveillant hospitality. It is not out of place here to say again, that the charm of old furniture is doubled if it is allowed to speak to them it now delights of those shadowy folks who called it into being and whose doings are far enough away to be called history.

The Jacobean period is hard to leave. Its riches are infinite, it speaks eloquently of more things than wood and carver's tools, for the man is always more than his work. If in the time of the Tudors England awoke, in the time of the Stuarts it most assuredly remained alive. But as the Renaissance in the Northern countries included a religious awakening,

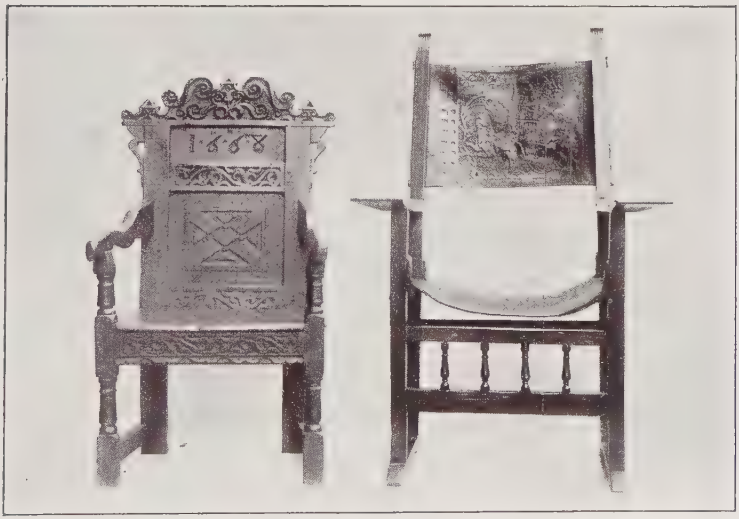


Fig. 76. A—JACOBEAN WAINSCOT CHAIRS
B—JACOBEAN CHAIRS

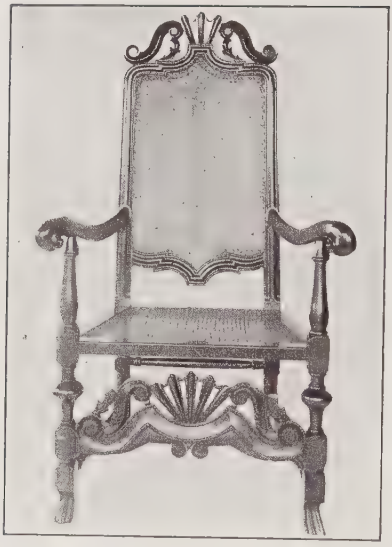


Fig. 77. A—JACOBEAN CHAIR, YORK, ME.
B—JACOBEAN COUCH

and the rigidity of Calvin was welcomed by the sturdy races, so the decorative art of England, and more particularly under the Commonwealth, showed a moral formality which was a protest against the indulgence of the senses.

CHAPTER X

QUEEN ANNE

THE ANGLO-DUTCH PERIOD, 1689-1753. — RULERS, WILLIAM AND MARY, 1689-1702; ANNE, 1702-1714. GEORGE I

WITH all reverence must the Queen Anne period be approached and studied, for in it we find matter of absorbing interest, the beginning, in fact, of the great train of minor styles that produced the furniture we hold so dear, the furniture of our American forefathers. This fact is indeed the excuse for the space we will give this period, for in itself it is far from perfection and fails signally in beauty when compared with the style we call Chippendale, which it immediately preceded. It is not too much to say that the Queen Anne style opened the way for Chippendale even if it did not furnish all his inspiration.

To understand the Chippendale style, then, it is necessary to go back to its roots which are bedded in this the preceding period. And to understand that we turn with pleasure to note first causes of Queen Anne, this taking us into the department of history.

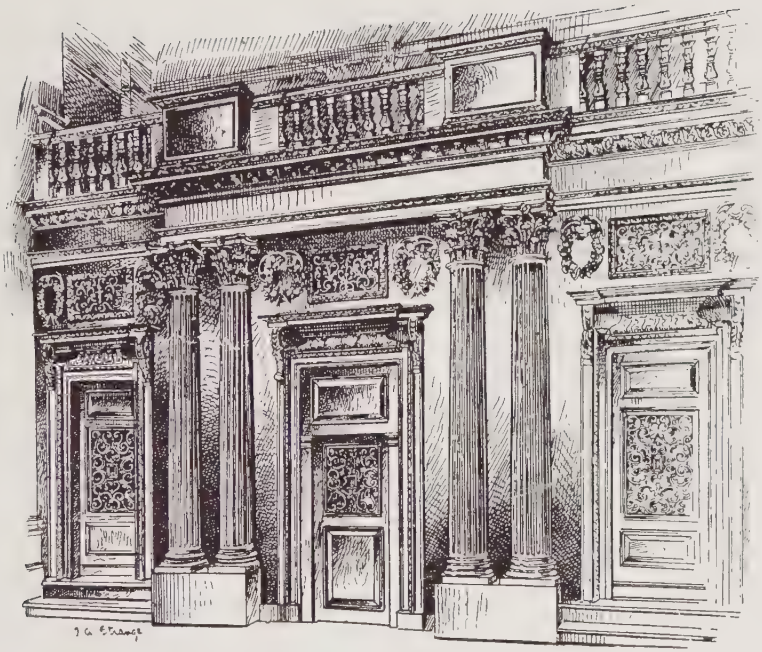
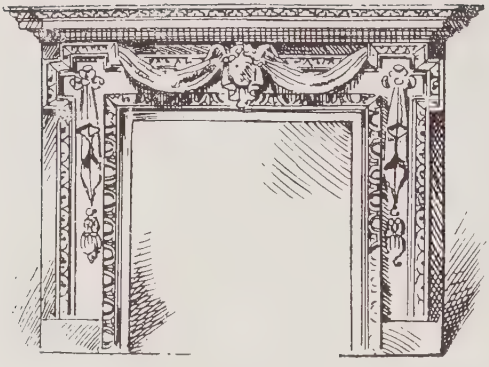


Fig. 78. SIDE AISLE OF THE CHOIR OF ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL, LONDON
Sir Christopher Wren and Grinling Gibbons



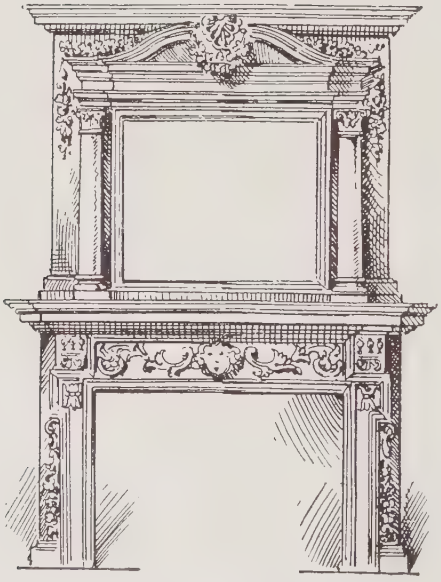


Fig. 79. MANTELS BY INIGO JONES

It is clear to us now how the Gothic was discarded for the imported Renaissance, which in time developed into the native Elizabethan, influenced by Flanders, became the Jacobean, and through all these changes becoming more and more complicated in construction, more suited to an ever intensifying civilisation.

Cromwell could not fail to stiffen style as he stiffened morals and those whom they regulate, for style is but the outward sign of thought. The severe old commoner's reign was scarcely long enough to do more than temporarily constrict the hand of the craftsman, and quick was the return to more lightsome ways whose tendency was ever toward more refinement and delicacy.

After the Commonwealth came two feeble Stuarts, Charles II and James II, and the second of these bowed himself out of his throne and away to the more congenial atmosphere of France with a wide sweep of his feathered hat and a smiling, "Place aux dames" to his daughter Mary.

We almost forget Mary in her Dutch husband William who, although only consort, felt not so convincingly that his wife was called to wear an English crown as that he was to rule England. It was in 1689 that the Dutch Stadtholder, as he was called, took the place of the Stuart kings who had gone before him, and perhaps to him was due the attribute accorded the fighting English of never knowing

admitted no rival in the field, but routed all, proving at the same time its worthiness to occupy its place.

The cabriole leg is the one great point of this decorative period with which the collectors of old English and American furniture must arm themselves against statements of the ill-informed. It had not appeared in England previous to this time.

Its French prototype went to extravagant lengths of decoration later on, and likewise did the English leg under Chippendale when his style began to wander from the ways of purity, but at present we have only to do with the substitution of the curved line for the straight in the supports of tables, chairs, and case-work.

Lest any one be confused by seeing a leg of straight line in furniture attributed to this time, it must be said that such was still made, and illustrated the continuance of Flemish influence and the employment of turning.

In examining chairs we have to look at another characteristic, the back. Two peculiarities strike us; one is its defection from the rigidity of the exactly perpendicular. Turn a chair sideways and it will show a sinuous line to accord with that given by nature to the human spine.

In decorative effect it is marked with the wide, flat splat, framed in with a continuous rail which is thrown over the top without a break, but with graceful sinuations. The great height of the back must

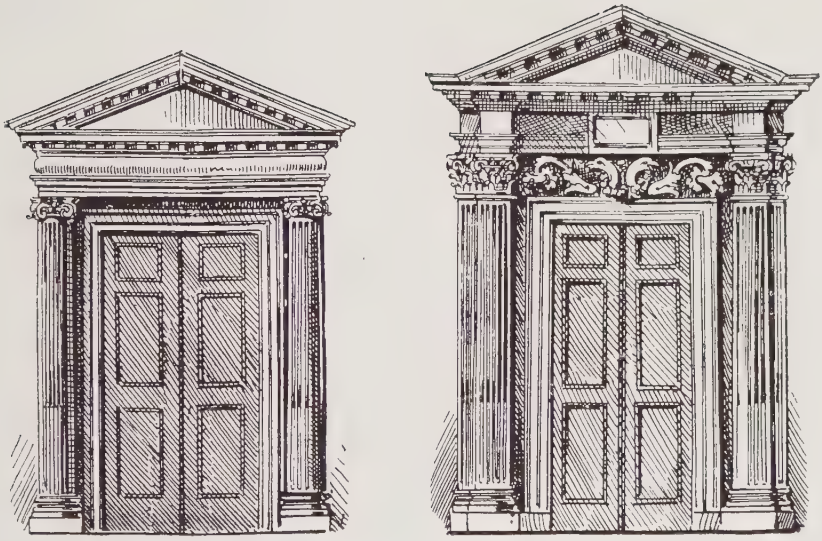


Fig. 80. DOORWAYS BY INIGO JONES

Fig. 81. A—QUEEN ANNE MIRROR. B—QUEEN ANNE TABLE
C—QUEEN ANNE CHAIR. D—QUEEN ANNE TABLE

be mentioned lest this style be confused with a much later reflection, one which appeared in that stretch of sterile years which now, with little compliment to a great queen, we call the Victorian period. It was a joiner of this later time who bragged of a "prentice job of six cherry-wood, bandy-legged fiddle-back, rush-bottom chairs," a description not inapplicable to the Queen Anne time. Apropos of that, it is a pity that 'prentice jobs and 'prentice systems are no more, for furniture made by such eager devotion to craft and to ambition can scarce be equalled in modern factories.

A chair came in at this time which had straight legs and a square seat, which was placed diamond-wise, with a corner in front. This effect was gained by the simple experiment of framing the opposite corner with a semi-circular back.

The window chair is a product of this time, and for certain uses has never been surpassed in utility and comfort. Comfort was, indeed, a prime consideration at this time, which saw a great increase in the matter of upholstery. Chairs were at last made in which man might lounge and take his ease and woman might abandon herself to grace and relaxation.

Besides the chairs with arms, and the chairs with high-padded backs which spread out generously for shoulders wide and shoulders dimpled, there was the great luxurious contrivance known as the wing

chair, an affair of high back and enclosing sides, all covered with stuffings and stuff, no wood frame to suggest hardness in the midst of this soft luxury, except short, square legs to bear with confidence the weight. It is now called a grandfather's chair, but is it not prettier to discard the theory that the protecting wings were made as bulwarks against rheumatic draughts, and were instead asylum for a golden head which tantalisingly coquetted from this luxurious vantage ground? It was not always old men who sat in what we are wont to call our grandfather's chair.

Some of the old men of those days have, however, left a name on certain chairs. There is, for example, the chair we first considered, that of the splat back and cabriole leg, with or without under-framing. That is called the Hogarth chair, and doubtless the eccentric artist sat in chairs of this kind when he had in hand the moral caricature of "The Rake's Progress" or "Marriage à la Mode." It pleases us to think so at least, and we may do it with assurance of being right, for during his life this was the typical straight chair.

To an increase in literary taste and in literary work is attributable the improvement made in desks. Lovable, rascally, humorous Dick Steele needed a suitable plateau for his lively elbows to rest while his pen scampered over the page and journals waited for copy. And the scholarly Pope desired an asylum

for his papers and a convenient place for his books while writing for all men his famed essay on the subject which is ever fresh in interest. All these had emulators as great artists ever have, and so the need grew for a desk which would suit the litter of literary work, and designers produced what has never been excelled in convenience, except by the office roll-top desk, which has no place in this book.

The desk we know as the Dutch desk is the desk of this time, although brought to a higher perfection later. It began as a bureau, then had a top added, full of enticing little pigeonholes and drawers, which were concealed by a slanting lid that lowered to make a plane. On top of all was set a bookshelf, a convenience, not a beauty, but a comfort to all who both read and write. One of the earliest of these desks had half of the bookcase fitted with a mirror and a place for toilet accessories, a matter which might recommend itself to the modern apartment as companion to the celebrated space saver, the folding-bed.

The desks were simple, flat at sides and front, and stood on legs that were slightly curved, or later on a short claw and bell. Elaborations of this style show a later period.

The high-boy (French *haut-bois*) or tall-boy belongs to this period, but spreads over the next where many decorative changes were made. In its earlier manifestations it stands on six turned legs of the bul-

bous style we know as Dutch. These legs are underframed with a waving line which gives an effect of lightness. The table closely resembles the low-boy, and on this the large drawers stand in a neat compact square without other pediment than a moulding. On bookcases the pediment appears.

Attractive at all times are the tables of this time with their slender curved legs, although the cabriole leg is not at its best when too much elongated, as in the small drop-leaf table shown in the illustration. Its better appearance is on the shorter limit of the other table given. A feature of tables is the presence of several drawers and the waving line across the front which has an architectural effect of arches, and which pleases in accordance with its correctness of drawing.

Glass coming now into larger use gave an opportunity for the display of small treasures without exposing them to damage, and cabinets were made, very much on the plan of bookcases. Hanging mirrors for the wall became a feature of the time, and were framed in a way that prevents their being confused with those that came later. They were flat, the early glass not being bevelled, and the frames had none of the relief both high and heavy which has since been used. The frame proper was sawn from mahogany as soon as that wood was imported, in any fanciful design of curves, and on this flat field was laid a decoration in low relief, sometimes carved, some-

Fig. 82. QUEEN ANNE HIGHBOY

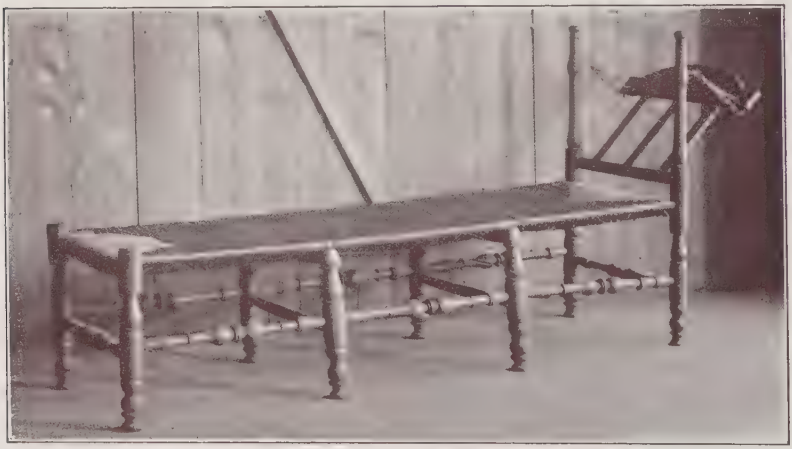


Fig. 83. A and B—QUEEN ANNE HIGHBOY. C—QUEEN ANNE COUCH

times moulded of stucco, but always gilded. The effect of the bright gold on dark mahogany is one that pleases quite as much now as it could have done at the time of its creation. On top of the mirror the designer usually placed a bird of some species best known to himself, who was always resplendent in gold. Except in certain imitations of French inventions, the glass of those hanging mirrors was in one piece.

It was at about this time that Holland was working her will with marquetry, producing her interpretation of the Italian intarsia done in many coloured woods. As a matter of course the reflection of it came to England, and is seen in some old pieces of this time, done in patterns of floriated scroll and dilutions of Renaissance designs worked out in wood of pear, sycamore, maple, mahogany and holly.

The woods of the time were oak, chestnut, walnut, beech, and the beginnings of that king of woods that has done more than all others to produce beauty of line and to bestow beauty of colour in the furniture of our homes — mahogany. The history of this wood is full of tradition, associating itself mainly with the New World, and setting an arbitrary date for its appearance. But deep investigation shows its timid beginnings, its experimental stage to be very early and limited to no country.

The period called Queen Anne is so arbitrarily named that it is impossible to speak of it without

mental reservations of historical accuracy. Having its beginning with William and Mary in 1689, it finished that century and started the next with Anne, then continued its influence on through the reign of the first George, up to the middle of the eighteenth century, when French influence produced so great a change — that is to the time of the designers who were headed by Chippendale. This gives a period of about sixty years, one in which many artists lived and designed and in which important historical events occurred.

Industrially considered, one of the most prolific of these events was the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, executed by Louis XIV. Very naturally the persecuted Protestant workmen fled to other countries less hostile to their religion, and thus Holland and England were enriched by men superior in their crafts. These were the artisans who made the Queen Anne furniture and fabrics that we prize, and that have been able to stand the wear of two centuries. Weavers took themselves and their adroit fingers to Spitalfields, near London, where the silk factory then established still exists.

Not only workmen were driven from France, but men of higher gifts. Daniel Marot, he who was architect under Louis XIV, fled to Holland, where he fell under the patronage of the Stadtholder William, and went with him to England. Hampton Court is full of his work and that of his favourite

Grinling Gibbons. Marot designed the king's coach, and coaches were in those days resplendent works of art, if cumbersome in mechanism. Marot had also designed for Boulle.

But the matter of most interest to us is that Marot was prolific in producing the tall clock case which we call grandfather's clock, and which appropriately stands in the hall a guardian of time for both owner and stranger.

Marot designed much interior decoration executed in carving, with the heavy semi-classic effect of the day. It was impossible that the magnificent revival of Roman designs under the ruling French sovereign Louis XIV should not cross the Channel and influence native artists. That it did so is shown in old houses, like that of Lord Chesterfield's and others, in this heavy style which follows at a distance the over-decorated architecture of ancient Rome.

Another influence which took the form of a craze was the Chinese. Dutch traders were in close touch with China and returning ships brought generous stocks of small wares from a country in which small wares abound. Porcelain was imported in such quantities and in such curious forms that no drawing-room was considered complete without an exhibition of Chinese dogs and dragons and enough teacups to hang all over the room. Even the great Marot felt it consistent with his dignity as royal

architect to design a mantel and side-walls for the especial accommodation of teacups and saucers.

It was in 1708, about forty years after the Great Fire of London, that Queen Anne ordered the churches of the city rebuilt. Inigo Jones had died fifty years before, but not so the Palladian styles with which he had impressed England. Before his death the young Sir Christopher Wren was maturing his talents, to succeed to the place of chief architect, and it was Wren whom Queen Anne chose for the work on the churches.

St. Paul's comes first to our minds as his *magnum opus,* and seems the forceful ruler with the lesser churches gathered about. The interior shows the rich adaptations of the classic in columns and details, all wonderfully carved by the master hand of Grinling Gibbons.

The interiors of the Queen Anne period were, as seen, Palladian, following down from the example of Inigo Jones. The note was set and the others continued it, more unchangingly in decoration than in furniture.

But now another influence came in by reason of the ever interesting personal equation. William the Stadtholder was inspired to envy of the grandiose Louis XIV, and this envy led to emulation. So Sir Christopher Wren, instead of going to Italy to become saturated with the spirit of art, went no further than France, and there absorbed and

Fig. 84. QUEEN ANNE CHAIR

Fig. 85. CHAIR. FIRST HALF XVIII CENTURY

Fig. 86. QUEEN ANNE TABLES

Fig. 87. BEAUFET, LONDON, 1715

worked until he said he had sketched everything there.

Yet, as Louis XIV styles were inspired by those of ancient Rome, it was only another means of keeping to the classic principle, adding certain exaggerations and expressing what was then modernity.

Wren built the State Apartments at Hampton Court for William and Mary in emulation of the king's great rival at Versailles. Here the oak wainscot is richly carved, although in general Wren's wainscot was comparatively plain. His walls are laid off in panels of dignified width surrounded with an enriched moulding. In general the rooms of the time have low dadoes, wide panels for pictures or tapestry, rich cornice, deep cove, and heavy ceilings.

The ceilings are of plaster, but great care was taken with the designs. Work was not executed in a distant shop, brought a distance, and placed regardless of fitness. Plaster workers and wood carvers were both at work in unison in the room where their products were to stay, and together effected the rich harmonies which have made celebrated certain old English houses. If we of these latter days criticise the heaviness of these old Queen Anne interiors, it is only from the point of view of one who lives in an age of small homes, where such enrichment would be out of place.

It is an interesting fact that the wood with which interiors were embellished frequently grew on the

estate of the gentleman who was building his house, and he naturally was limited to what his forest produced. For his fine carvings Grinling Gibbons used lime, pear, and cedar; but oak, sycamore, and walnut were commoner for panels and floors. Mahogany would have been a wonderful medium for Gibbons' exquisite work of swags of fruit and flowers, of groups of cherubs' heads, and of classic detail, but he died in 1721, just as the uses of that wood were being discovered. History records that this master carver was appointed by King George I, and received as recompense eighteen pence a day.

Examples of Queen Anne interiors are not wanting in our own country, where, if we had not Wren's original work, at least we profited by it through his followers. Old houses of Portsmouth, Independence Hall in Philadelphia, and many another colonial structure, show the serene dignity of the Palladian school of English architects. Interiors are simple, with an effect bordering on grandeur, as is ever the case where free yet judicious use is made of columns and pilasters. It is not only that the eye is pleased with his treatment, but that the reason is gratified. Even the merest suggestion of an order adds dignity, as it seems to give support to the ceiling, taking away the look of a box-lid.

CHAPTER XI

CHIPPENDALE

MIDDLE OF EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

IN our study of styles we have now come to a place where the brook and river meet, and where the waters blend to our confusion. It is impossible to proceed further without bringing in the furniture of America. But as one object of this book is to point the way through the ages up to that absorbing subject, we enter upon the path of investigation rejoicing. The major part of our study is, in fact, only a brief tracing of furniture history from the beginning, that we may know to what traditions we owe the development that we regard as peculiarly our own, to wit, the styles of Chippendale, Hepplewhite, Sheraton, and some minor men.

As England was the parent of the colonies, so is the relationship between English and American furniture. As we know, the early settlers of the North were thrifty, active people, for the most part without comfortable fortunes, yet with that self-respect that produces homes well-equipped with whatever was then considered necessary. At first the ships that

brought the people brought also their furniture, scant enough in the days of the " Mayflower " and her companions on the sea. And thus we have the early chests acting the double part of trunk and furniture for the new and perilous home, and a few scattered chairs. Comparison of dates shows that at this time in the seventeenth century the Stuart or Jacobean styles were reigning in England, — that style of box-like construction and flatly carved ornamentation which is a Northern reading of Italian revived classic.

And as prettily as the parts of a puzzle fit into place, we know at once why our early colonial furniture is of oak, and why it is of a style so stupendously different from the smooth turnings and plain surfaces of the period after mahogany came into use.

It represents the remains of the Jacobean period, which adds great value to these rare pieces, for it takes us still further back into antiquity. Occasionally a piece is found which was undoubtedly made in England. Others copy closely, the difference being mainly in the quality of the oak, for the enrichment in general follows the old lines.

Then a little later those colonists who were not engaged in spirited performances with the Indians developed a certain crude originality of design in ornament, and departed from the old drawing. In one design the classic Roman guilloche is replaced

Fig. 88. CHIPPENDALE DRAWERS AND MIRROR

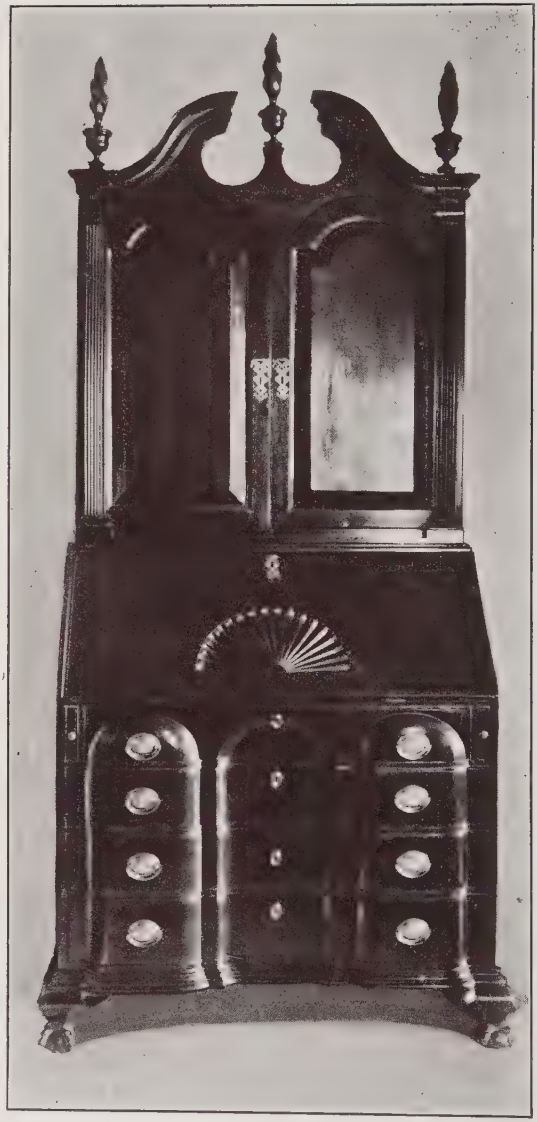


Fig. 89. A—CHIPPENDALE CLOCK. B—CHIPPENDALE BUREAU BOOKCASE

by the frank spread of the sunflower grouped or single, and chests of this type are called after the valley in which they were made, — the Connecticut. In Massachusetts originated quite another design, and this was called a vine, though its resemblance to that graceful meander of Nature is difficult to trace.

It is safe to assume that the more elaborate of the Jacobean chairs were imported, the wainscot type, for instance, and those later beautiful examples carved of walnut with the Spanish foot, placed as daintily on the floor as the little hoof of a deer. But the turned work is more often than not made this side the water.

Compared with the rich examples of Queen Anne furniture and carvings seen abroad, ours are simple indeed, and whether imported or made here is not always easy to determine. They all unite, however, in being of the strong, simple variety, and appeal to us through their honest construction and effect of grace. Many of them are simple enough to have been made by those joiners who came hither for that great desideratum, permission to hold and to confess whatever opinion a man pleased, as well as a chance to live. And many pieces were made by these men, and from the native woods they found in the abundance that their descendants have ever since abused.

And after Queen Anne comes the style we call

Chippendale, and that is our present topic for study, as it so closely concerns collectors and those who hold tenaciously to the one or two old pieces of furniture which inheritance has bestowed.

It would seem an absurdity to state boldly that Chippendale was a man, a furniture-maker, who secured permanent fame through a book of designs which he published in 1754. But everyone interested is not informed, as was proved lately by a Vermont gentleman who talked enthusiastically of having a fine Chippendale. All questions as to what sort of piece it was drew out but the one answer, that it was a Chippendale. A visit to the house showed it to be a sideboard, one after Hepplewhite's drawing.

Perhaps, then, there remains still some confusion as to the history and method of this famous designer and workman, and also as to the rules for identifying his models, and this shall be my excuse for entering upon them at length. It is not uncommon to hear all old mahogany alluded to loosely as Chippendale, so that it is necessary to be familiar not only with his styles, but with those which immediately follow, — the styles introduced by Hepplewhite and Sheraton.

It is not supposable that decorative or applied arts went on repeating designs without change from the advent of Dutch models until 1754, when Thomas Chippendale crystallised his patterns and his erudi-

tion in book form. A gentle insidious transition period occupied the forty years between Anne's death and the publication of this book, during which time many furniture-makers were gradually moulding the style. Perhaps it is not fair to these men to leave them out of mention.

They did almost as much to make the style under consideration as the man for whom it was named, yet his was the more brilliant talent, and his the more fashionable shop. Honour to whom honour is due is a difficult dictum to follow, and the style had to have a name, so for the sake of accuracy we may inform ourselves about these other men, and then rejoice that the name selected to cover the period is one so rare and so euphonious.

A little of the man and of his life is necessary for our full enjoyment, for after all the personal element is ever one that piques the interest. Thomas Chippendale was born in Worcester, and was bred to the trade of wood-carver, his family being engaged in that business. We have only to remember the heavy enrichment of interior decoration by Grinling Gibbons to know that there must have been many such in England at the time.

Chippendale as we know him best is master of a shop in St. Martin's Lane, London, — a prosperous tradesman, who had both a gift for his work and a nice instinct for fashion. He knew how to turn out the most acceptable furniture of the day, and knew,

too, how to sell it at high price, — although canniness wedded to imagination could never have foreseen the prices that his works would bring now, when five thousand dollars is paid for a double chair, and ten thousand for a high-boy.

To please fashionable folk he must learn their pleasure, and to that end made his shop a resort of persons of leisure, a place where fops and wits, beauties and matrons were wont to assemble, it being a custom of the day thus to meet at shops, especially those which dealt in wares from the newly appreciated East. And so while fashionable London flirted and gossiped, exclaimed "Zounds," and "Law, Sir Peter," and generally comported itself in ways delectable, Thomas Chippendale displayed his talent and his wares and became the fashion.

His book was not by any means his initial step, his style did not spring full-armed from his brain, but resulted from long work and much experiment, and also much association with persons of distinction. It is always with half-compassion that our awe for Dr. Johnson is tempered, — he with the brusque and bumping ways of a bumblebee, he of the great mind, great body, and little manners. It is a pleasant bit of fancy to see him pause in his eccentric walks about Fleet Street and the Strand, and turn towards the shop of the popular "upholder," there to discuss the making of the new book which is now to us such a valuable possession. For it

was Samuel Johnson who wrote the rare quaint preface to this great volume, that preface which abounds in phrases of infinite, though unintended humour.

Chippendale's manner of design is in three phases, and as these apply also to the other important makers of the day, they come as appropriately whether we are discussing the style Chippendale or merely the products of the one man. The most important of these phases is the French. It is more flattering to the Anglo-Saxon to assume that the harmonious grace and delicate enrichment of the time was a product original with the "tight little isle." But blind and insular indeed are those who will not see that the inspiration came directly from outside. To understand Chippendale in all the fulness of its beauty one must do ever as this great craftsman did — become saturated with the style in vogue in France when Louis XV reigned, and with him ruled the curve of the rococo, the coquillage, the rock-shell derivations. On this style Chippendale based the most exquisite of his detail.

But as no thought finds the same manifestation in one hand as in another, so Chippendale's work was not pure Louis XV, not a slavish copy, but was that graceful effort influenced by the temperament across the Channel. A certain condition of living which we like to think impossible to the Anglo-Saxon produced the style Louis Quinze. Taken across the

Channel, it must then lose its structural or moral weakness, while losing none of its exquisite charm.

This is the true interpretation of Chippendale's French work and shows plainly for all to read. In the French work construction was formed of ornament; in the English work construction remained honest, and ornament was applied only to embellish. So Chippendale kept the English form and added French detail.

As it is mainly to the chair that this theory is applicable, let us examine chairs of this period as a botanist analyses a specimen of a plant family, and learn its distinctive features. For this purpose we will avoid the chairs which are but copies of the French, and take the style which is more definitely English, — the straight chairs illustrated.

First we notice wherein the back differs from the Queen Anne back. It is made graceful, even as the human figure is made graceful, by a width at the shoulders, which tapers gradually towards the waist. This general form is followed in all chairs of this class, no matter what their decorative carving. Below the seat the taper still continues to the very end of the back legs, but is done in a curve so subtle that the effect is to diminish the importance of this part, which is always uncarved. In addition to this, the back tips slightly away from the seat.

In the carved detail of the backs much play of

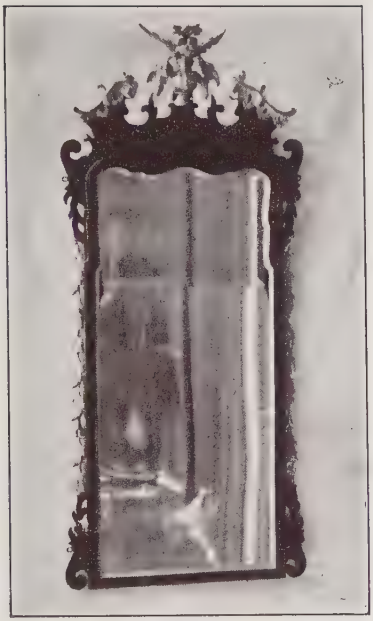


Fig. 90. A—CHIPPENDALE MIRROR.

B—CHIPPENDALE CHAIR

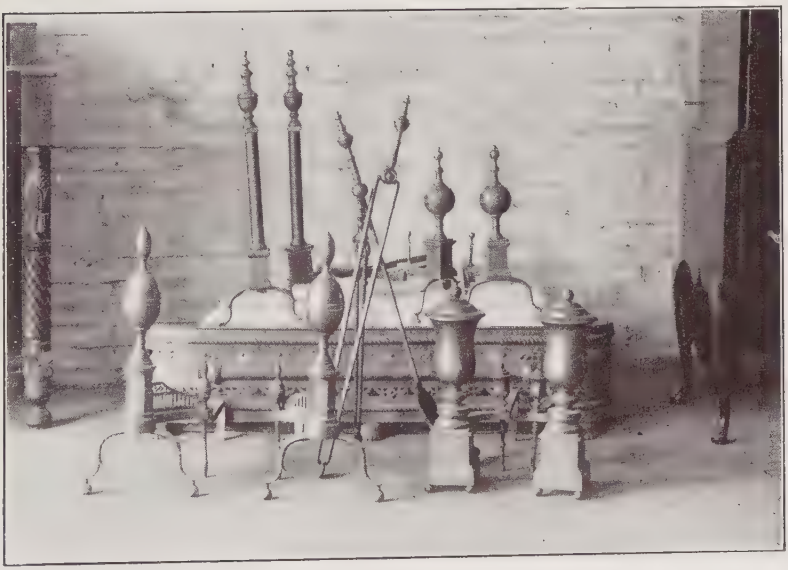


Fig. 91. ANDIRONS, XVIII CENTURY

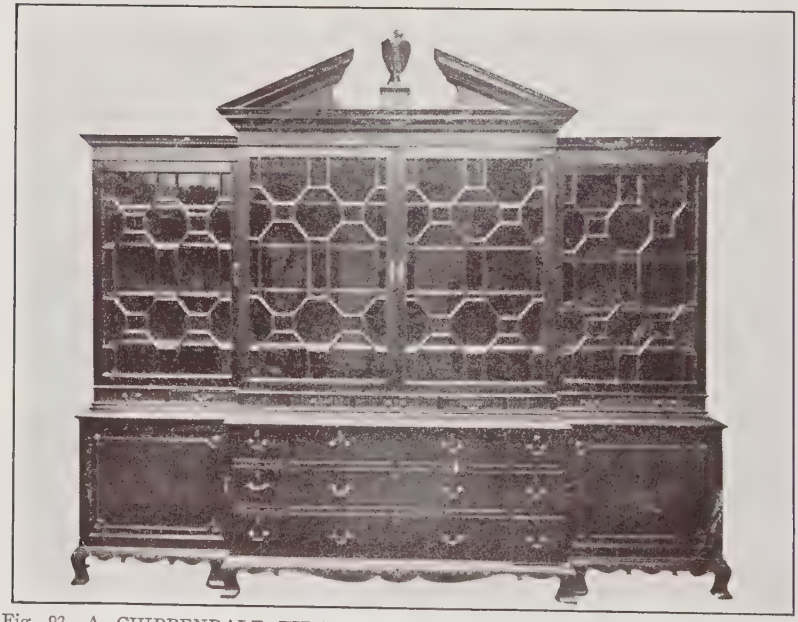


Fig. 92. A—CHIPPENDALE TIP-TABLE B—CHIPPENDALE BOOKCASE

imagination is seen, yet the character of all is similar. C scrolls abound, placed back to back or crossed or elongated, or any way which produces grace, and these are combined with sinuous slats and other curves in infinite variety. The one rule observed is to produce an effect of lightness by pierced and open carving. The ribbon-back chair, whose name describes it, is too celebrated not to mention here, but specimens are too rare to consider possible as acquisitions. Chippendale says of them in his book, in quaint conceit, "Plate XVI is three ribbon-back chairs, which, if I may speak without vanity, are the best I have ever seen (or perhaps have ever been made)." Backs of pierced horizontal slats are true Chippendale, although a departure from his usual method.

To continue with the analysis of the chair, the legs are of two varieties, — the cabriole and the straight. The ornamentation on the cabriole leg is in entire harmony with the back, and, like it, has scrolls, shells, and foliations by way of enrichment. In many cases it strongly resembles the Queen Anne, but on fine pieces it more delicately reflects the French.

Straight legs accompany the backs which we are considering, both under-framed and left un-stayed. They are unornamented as a rule, yet this is not invariably true, as we shall see.

Seats unite in being much wider in front than

across the back, and this again helps to produce the desired slender waist.

So far as Chippendale's copies of the styles of Louis XV are concerned, they interest Americans as the unattainable always interests. Very little of this class of work was brought to the colonies, and we had not the native artists to copy it. It is coming to our country now as works of art, bought as other curios and bibelots are done, at immense prices by those who are desirous of collecting. But it is not associated with the early days of our people, and so, although worshipable as art, lacks the endearing quality of old association.

These French styles of Chippendale might almost have been made across the Channel, except that the French pieces were generally gilded, while the English were carved from mahogany, finished with rare perfection and left in all its native richness of colour. I speak not only of chairs but also of highboys, desks, and other case-work, especially those in which Chippendale copied the *bombé* form, which swells with self-importance and silently boasts the high price which it brought. Pieces like this are rare, and more than highly prized. Their ornamentation is carved in designs of leafage, shells, and frilling, entirely after the French manner, and large broken pediments are used with incongruous effect.

Chippendale's roving eye turned everywhere for ideas. He is accused of being not an originator but

an adapter. In his search for novelty he hit upon the Gothic, and this is the second of his class of designs. As in the case of the French style, he merely impressed it into his service as an aid in ornamentation, but altered nothing of his general outlines, except perhaps the tops of bookcases.

We have only to remember the China craze of the day to know that Chippendale could not well avoid it. Indeed, he found it already influencing French artists while he was studying them, altering their drawing and making yet more fantastic their erratic lines. Chinese pagodas, bridges, landscapes, were taken as an inspiration and as an excuse for what looks to us now like bad taste.

But among the highly-prized importations were grills or lattice work in an unending variety of line, and from these Chippendale absorbed an idea productive of beauty. It is shown in chairs by an ornamentation on the legs which is harmoniously combined with French backs. This is always applied to straight legs. The lattice often forms the entire back of the chair, and in such cases the outline of the back is much squarer than usual.

This lattice was sawn out from sheets of wood and secured by pins and glue onto the surface of the piece to be decorated, which was a cheaper device than carving. Carvers, however, only received five shillings a day for expert services.

The rare bookcases that give a glow of satisfac-

tion to owners and beholders would never have been so beautiful but for Chippendale's use of Chinese lattice. He saw at once its beauty when applied to glass, and used it freely. The distinguishing mark of this kind of his work is its lack of curves.

The abundant inspiration of Chinese art caused Chippendale to say of the Chinese manner, "I think it the most useful of any other"; but when it runs to stalagmites which drip disintegratingly from rococo scrolls, it speaks of weakness, so to our eye the daintily intricate lattice is the best.

The ball-and-claw foot, so agreeably familiar in furniture of the latter half of the eighteenth century, is it not directly traceable to the Chinese influence? The two wild contending dragons that swirl in terrible menace and satisfactory curves on embroideries, porcelains, and carving, are familiar figures on Chinese work. Between them is always the flame-enveloped pearl or ball, for whose possession they ever contend. It is an inspiration for the artist in mahogany to clip one extended claw, to place snugly within it the floating ball, and to make at once the claw-and-ball foot, which is our delight. Who was the artist it is not safe to say, but as Chippendale was the most talented of adapters it is not unreasonable to lay the inspiration to him.

It is a matter of dispute where Chippendale was

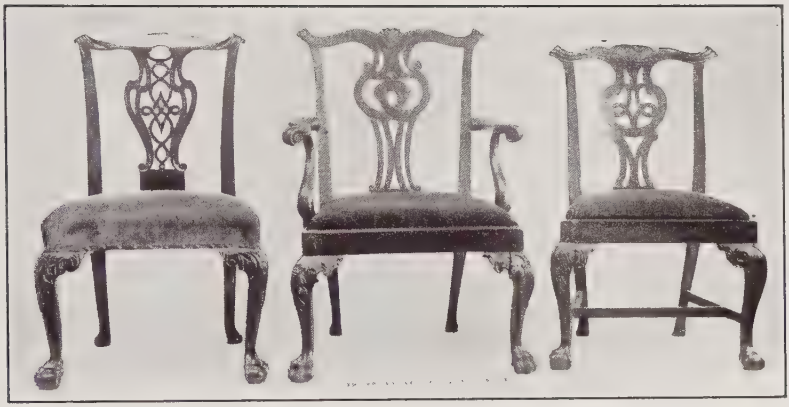


Fig. 93. CHIPPENDALE CHAIRS

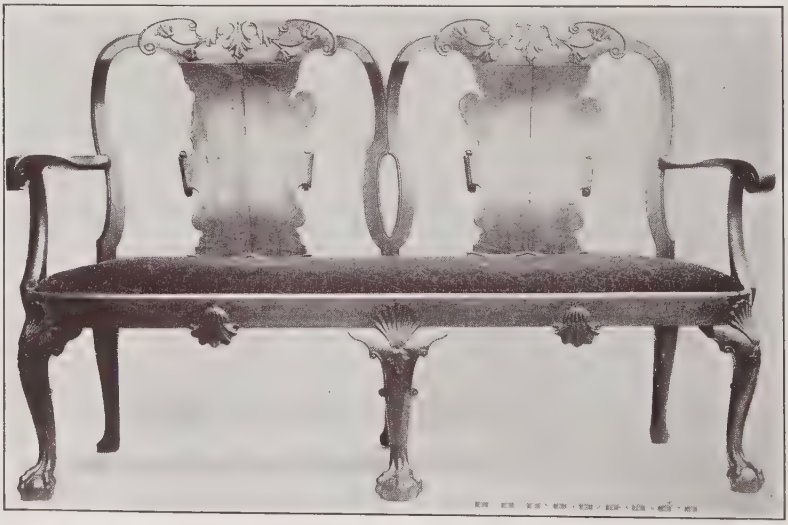


Fig. 94. A—CORNER CHAIR, CHIPPENDALE. B—CHIPPENDALE SOFA, 1740

first introduced to Chinese art. A favourite theory is that the one responsible was Sir William Chambers, an artist who travelled much in the East, and who tried on his return to adapt Chinese styles to English requirements. It is true also that others made the same attempt. Edwards and Darly, a celebrated firm, manufactured also after the Chinese manner before the appearance of Chippendale's book, and Thomas Johnson published prior to this a book of designs embodying not only the Chinese but the Gothic and the rococo, engrafting all three on the English as did the more conspicuous master. William Halfpenny was another who designed in "Chinese taste." But apart from all these adapters there was the mass of importations from China, and the fancy of fashionable folk to dress their homes with it, and these should in themselves have been enough to inspire one so quick to seize, so talented to adapt, as Chippendale.

For the old use of the word bureau we need only turn to the French, which means an office. Applied to the capacious desk of the time we are considering it is most apt. These desks so satisfactorily common in our country, these capacious repositories which make possible the hoarding of precious nothings, came in with the Dutch invasion, like the highboy, but it pleased Chippendale to perfect them as well as the three-footed tip table and other designs, so that the furniture immediately preceding him gave

him a field whereon to work the magic of his embellishing lines. Also, this makes a little harder the agreeable puzzle of determining the dates of many of our American heirlooms. As a general clue, the simpler styles are the earlier, and although coming long past 1714, the end of the reign of Anne, they take her name in general classification merely because Chippendale is not yet arrived.

Grandfather clocks were introduced by the Marot who served Louis XIV, and then fled to Holland, which led to his being court architect under William III of England; but we are more interested, perhaps, in the fact that Chippendale made these tall monitors, or at least made their cases. His finest ones were after the French manner, even having a *bombé* base, but in general they were more happily severe. His designs were copied in this country, but even before his day their forerunners were being made by Benjamin Bignall in Boston, and others. Enos Doolittle of Hartford made clocks at the time Chippendale was flourishing in England.

Mirrors and girandoles by Chippendale are not easily confused with other varieties if one bears in mind their strong resemblance to the rococo. All through the eighteenth century the type prevailed which has a flat of dark wood, cut in a meaningless outline, and ornamented with gilded relief. They have a decided charm in their best manifestations, but are not the ambitious affairs of attenuated carv-

ing that Chippendale copied so closely from the French that the two are scarcely distinguishable.

The four-post bedstead reigned in Chippendale's time, and on this his fancy played. Examples are extant of the magnificent canopies with which he crowned it, making of the bed a rococo couch or a Chinese pagoda, or a disturbing mingling of both, but for our purposes these are worth no more than casual mention.

The bed-posts, however, may well be studied to correct a mistake existing in the minds of many regarding the carved poles found in our country. Chippendale's poles are comparatively slender and have but slight enrichment, which is founded more on the classic than on his favourite French and Chinese, yet sometimes smacks of the Gothic.

The style of Chippendale, we have seen, is his because he dared. It unites what went before with what was imported, and was far from being his own, yet he was the greatest furniture-maker of his day in England, and created or assembled the parts of a distinctive style which has never been surpassed for elegance and utility among Northern peoples. The natural moral rigidity which we like to think is ever ours is reflected in this style, when it is contrasted in its entirety with the style prevailing in France at that time.

Scarcely one of the beauties of Chippendale that cannot be traced to the French inspiration; yet while

taking the grace he left the laxity, engrafting embellishment on dignity, as when chaste Diana is crowned with a gay bacchante's wreath. And this happy combination is one we like to consider especially our own, and superior to the more voluptuous art of the Latin.

To continue with our hints on identification, it can be said in the final summing up that the style under consideration depends for enrichment on carving, never on inlay nor painting. This is a rule.

Beauty of proportion was studied carefully, so that even the simplest pieces were perfect of their kind. In his book Chippendale gives much instruction on architectural orders to the end that proportion may be studied. This was not a peculiarity of his book alone, nor original with him, for his work was not given to the public until 1753, and in 1739 William Jones published one of the first books on interiors and furniture. Abraham Swan, in 1745, interpreted in book form the rococo engrafted on the English square construction, illustrating delightfully the change of a decorative thought as it passes through an alien intelligence. Ince and Mayhew must not be overlooked as contemporaneous workers with Chippendale.

Mahogany is as closely associated with Chippendale as are the very syllables of his name. It was he who best developed its wonderful possibilities, discarding all ornament which might detract from the

Fig. 95. CHIPPENDALE CHAIR

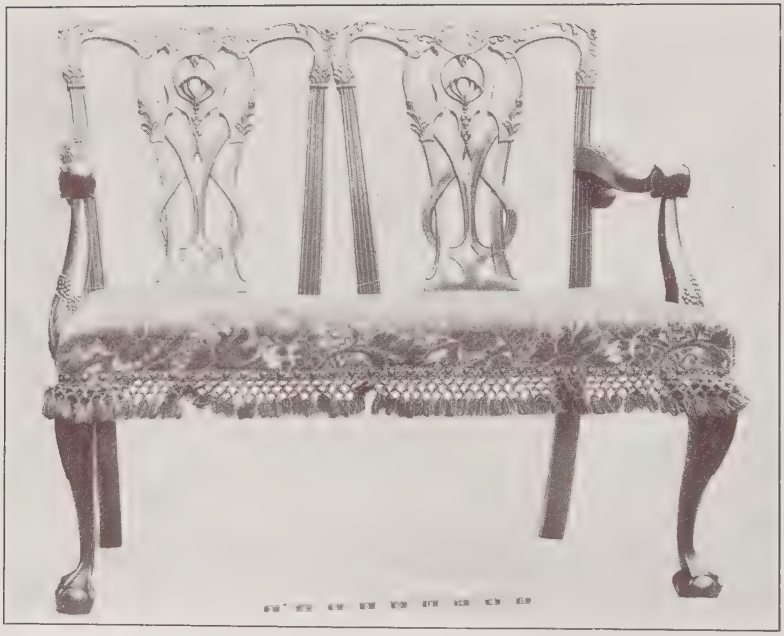


Fig. 96. CHIPPENDALE DOUBLE CHAIR

beauty of the wood. It is not true that he worked entirely in this medium, for he also used cherry, maple, and birch; nor is it true that he was the first to employ it. The story of its introduction is authentic and helps to fix the age of an antique English piece, but out of England it was used sparingly, as has been seen.

To Dr. Gibbon of London is given the credit of its entry into cabinet-making. The story is that his brother brought him some planks of the wood which he endeavoured to use as a substitute for a certain medicinal bark. The quantity on hand exceeding his need, he offered it to carpenters for the completion of some work they were executing for him. Found too hard, the wood was rejected. Thereupon the persistent doctor had a candle-box made of it, also a bureau, and such was his delight that he asked his friends to come and see the novelties. Among the guests was the Duchess of Buckingham, who begged the favour of some planks, had them made up into furniture, and at once the bright glow of mahogany was coveted by the fashionable and was lavishly adopted. This was in 1720.

And yet the Dutch were using the wood at the time of Charles II of England, and mahogany is mentioned in a Philadelphia inventory in 1708. All of which gives clues to the collector and student, at the same time a warning for pitfalls.

To continue with the English experiences of the

wood, it brings us into close connection with Horace Walpole. His house at Houghton was building between 1722 and 1735, under Isaac Ware. One large room therein is described as "wainscotted in mahogany, and the bed, which is of painted taffety, stands in an alcove of the same room."

The increase in the variety of articles produced in this fascinating period of interior embellishment is easily explained by the rapid advance in intellectual life of the time, the increase of elegance in living, and the infinite demands of such existence. It was a time when Sir Joshua Reynolds was painting the beauties that thrill us now; when Garrick was making the world laugh or cry at his will, crying himself sometimes when too much softened by his cups; a time when the obscure son of the brilliant Lord Chesterfield was receiving the famous letters instructing him — and us — in a transcendent worldliness; a time when Locke was discoursing on the Human Understanding in a way to make us realise that it was highly developed; and a time when belles and beaux seem to have had prettier ways with them than ever are seen at shorter range.

The first of the house of Hanover, George I, came over with his German tongue and German household to reign over English people, but little or nothing did he contribute to the mental vivacity of the day. France, with its elegant and witty ways, was an inspiration more real, and was followed at a

prudent distance, but not without admiration, — for were not Voltaire, Rousseau, and Montesquieu at Versailles with the makers of the philosophic Encyclopedia?

George II was enthroned at the time of Chippendale's greatest prosperity, and in the Seven Years' War with France the American colonies were carrying their share of the trouble, which spread overseas. This was the time when George Washington appears as a gallant young officer, and independence was undreamed of. But while the chairs and tables of Chippendale were being used, the necessity was forced upon those who played their daily parts among them of resisting the unjust Stamp Act, and of following the counsel of Poor Richard, and other makers of American public opinion.

In our country we are accustomed to seeing the furniture of the Chippendale style disposed in rooms almost cold in their simplicity, unless the furniture has been removed from its original environment. Colonial houses maintained a great simplicity except in notable instances, but in England, the home of the Chippendale style, conditions were different. Therefore it is to England we must look for examples of interiors of the middle eighteenth century.

The most striking thing about the wood-work and decorations is the classic construction, about which the envious fancy set the eccentricities of the Louis

Quinze detail imported in a frenzy of admiration and employed without understanding. The very secret of the Louis Quinze lines are their ability to stand without support, to form a harmonic whole in defiance of the laws of horizontal and uprights, to make decoration constructive.

Such delicacy, such riot of sensuality in line is not possible to the Anglo-Saxon. He must start with a firm, trustworthy construction; and, having thus satisfied his demand for solidity, he is ready to adorn that shape with the greatest fancies of the Latin's poetic vagaries. The result is that the whole spirit of the matter is lost. The gay details are there, but also the solid Briton, as though a solemn judge in court had set a cracker-motto cap above his wig and thrown a paper garland about his gown.

The doors and windows, the cornices and dadoes are in heavy dignity, more or less simple according to cost, and all are drawn on the lines followed by Wren, in emulation of Louis Quatorze. Then around these, in many instances, are incongruously laid the curves of the Louis Quinze style. Nothing could be more inharmonious, nor could anything more aptly illustrate the difference between inspired originality and covetous adoption.

Fortunately the style so impossible to transplant had but a brief and feeble hold, and true to their principles of art and morals, the artist-craftsmen of

Fig. 97. CHIPPENDALE DOUBLE CHAIR

Fig. 98. CHIPPENDALE, QUEEN ANNE, CHIPPENDALE

the day soon discarded the decorations that so ill accorded with the classic, retaining loyally the satisfying straight lines and Greek detail. Associated with these the Chippendale furniture is at its best.

CHAPTER XII

THE ADAM BROTHERS

SECOND HALF OF EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

TO those who know well the chaste beauty of colonial interiors in America, to those who have lived amid their delicate purity and have marvelled happily on the good taste which produced them, a few pages on the subject of the Adam period in England cannot fail to be of interest.

It is in the Adam style that we find the inspiration of American work near the time of our independence. Ours was the American reflection of the English, and again illustrates richly the fate of styles or motifs when subjected to varying temperaments and political conditions. It is not to be for a moment supposed that any glory is taken from the efforts of our early designers by tracing their inspiration to an English source, nor is their honour lessened by the discovery that in a way the style they practised was not original. The application of the mode of that day to suit original conditions is no less praiseworthy than creation of new designs.

We might carry the thought still further, and ask where the Adam brothers got their ideas. But this brief sketch of these men and their time will discover that interesting fact.

In the preceding chapter we have seen that Chippendale reigned supreme, with his French thoughts dressed in English taste, and have seen how absolutely the curved styles pleased the public, — as well they might, for never have warmth and refinement been more beautifully balanced than in the carved mahogany pieces of that time. Also we have seen that this style represents the play of British temperament upon the Louis XV motif.

We now approach a time, embracing a series of decorative styles in England and in France, when the entire decorative idea reverts to the most refined classic. The radical change from eccentric curves to rigid straight lines occurred in France by reason of the change of monarchs. Possibly kings themselves would not disdain the fittings of other kings, their predecessors, but artists and craftsmen, not from cupidity but from eager desire for production, see in a new accession a chance to present their latest creations.

When Louis XVI mounted an uncertain throne the Italian influence was strong at court, as we have seen. Reluctantly we must ascribe this revival of purity of taste to the unworthy Madame de Pompadour, who had sent artists to Pompeii for study

and inspiration. The story of the progress of this style is simple and logical.

Artists took it as the basis of the new method for the new king, and rapidly developed it into the style as we know it now and as adapted to modern needs.

As England turned to France for the finer embellishments of life, whether they were in dress, fashionable manners, or decoration, so she seized the new turn in matters decorative, and executed her British way on the new lines. But Italy furnished the inspiration for both countries. The subject is full of interest and bears elaborate investigation, for it relates directly to our own so-called colonial fancies, although the colonies were turning to States. Colonial work being as dear to us as ancestral trees, — with which it is closely associated, — we can never have our fill of it, and never tire in its study. Indeed, the preceding styles take point and interest as they contribute to our larger knowledge of these fashions of our American forefathers.

With this preambling excuse for making their acquaintance, we will note one or two facts concerning the Adam brothers. There were four brothers and a father, all of the eighteenth century, all following architecture, and all leaving an impression on the art of the day.

Robert Adam, the second son, was the most famed, and associated with himself in business his brother

James. The father's choice of aid was his eldest son John, who assisted in building and in rebuilding certain celebrated mansions in Scotland, where the father Adam was born and held position of Master Mason. These data show the influences in which Robert Adam was educated.

Robert, who most interests us, was born in 1728, in Scotland, just at the time when George II was taking up the affairs royal and political of England. When he was about thirty years old he made a fruitful visit to Italy, and there became saturated with the antique.

On his return he and his brother became celebrated as builders, and those who love prowling about London for what it yields in antiquity find many of their edifices to tell the tale of their great industry. Persons of consequence and the nobility gave into their hands the building of their homes, some of which, like Kenwood House, Lansdowne House, White's Club, are more than celebrated. Their methods seem delightfully modern when we learn that, besides these commissions from distinguished patrons, Robert and James Adam executed a quantity of houses on speculation for their own business profit.

The Roman influence is plain on their work, but the Pompeian refinement is stronger. Especially is this true of interior decorations. Like all true architects the Adam brothers aimed at decorating

the houses they built, and it is in their interior work that they showed their talent for adaptation.

Disliking the staring of too much white, they adopted the plan of introducing delicate colour in the stucco work, in cornices, frieze, etc. The anthemium or the scroll no longer threw its white curves on a white background, but one or the other was tinted in pale shades of blue or green or red, or even gilded. The idea was as old as Rome, but was none the less beautiful on that account.

But as Rome was voluptuous and England, if not ascetic, was at least restrained, the Adam style became attenuated, copying rather the delicacy than the richness of the antique, and so it is called by its detractors thin and stringy. Possibly it is, in some of its detail, or when used in its entirety, but more than pleasing are its evidences of daintiness.

Closely allied with architecture is decoration, and the sequence leads to furniture. Robert Adam and his brother James felt that to preserve harmony a different style of furniture from that of Chippendale should fill the rooms of their rectangular schemes and classic decoration. Their attention was then turned to furniture, and thence comes a radical change. It is almost unnecessary to say that it was the same change that took place in France when the style Louis XVI deposed the style Louis XV.

Adam furniture bears a marked resemblance to the Louis Seize, with which it was cotemporaneous,

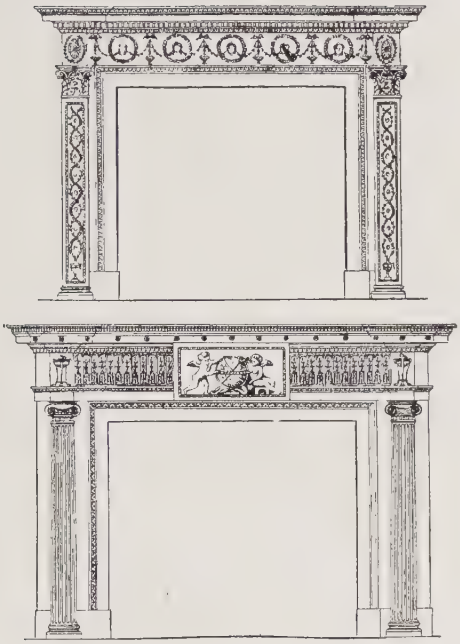


Fig. 99. MANTELS AFTER ADAM

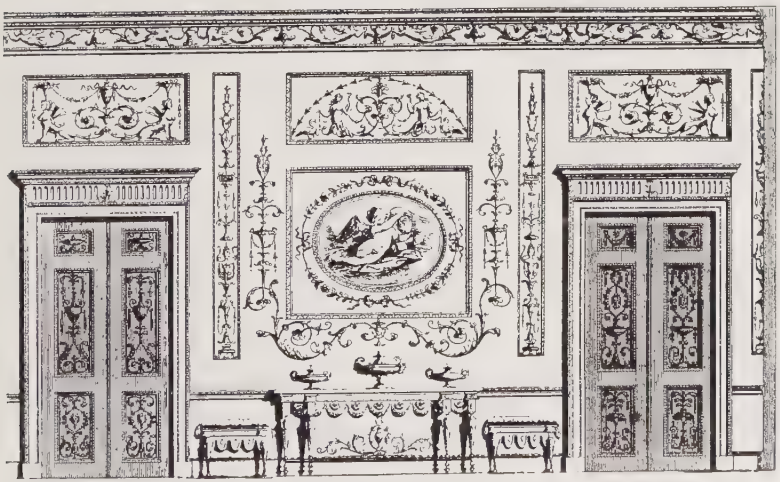
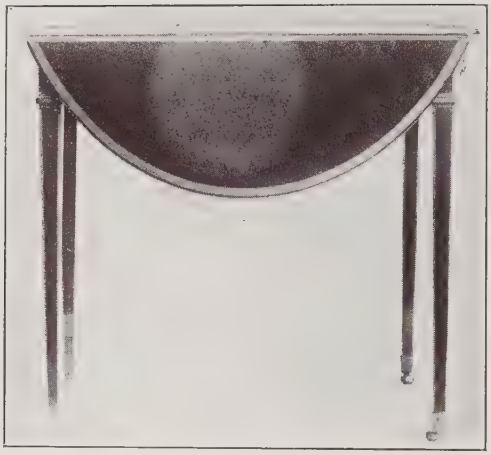


Fig. 100. SIDE OF ROOM BY PERGOLESI. LATE XVIII CENTURY



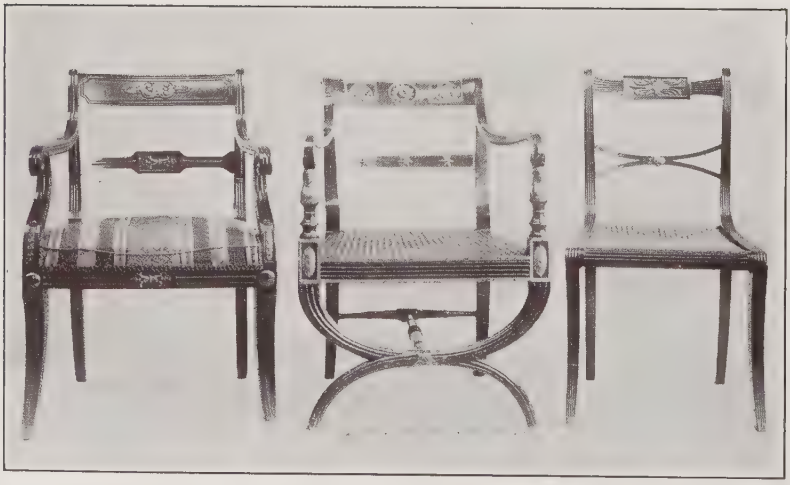


Fig. 101. A—ADAM TABLE. B—ADAM CHAIRS

and yet a little examination into its shapes would prevent their ever being confounded. The rectangularity insisted on in the French style is missing, although the same feeling of chasteness is imparted. Chairs are small and fine, and seem more suited to the fluttering visits of ladies than to the substantial repose of men. Their backs are low and narrow, more as a warning not to fall than as an asylum to embrace, and arms are slightly if ever upholstered. The legs are for the most part straight, this rule being followed to the exclusion of the cabriole leg, but not ignoring a gently sweeping curve or the classic motif seen on all cross-chairs.

Sofas were made delicate in appearance, with a strong inclination toward Greek effects, and the somewhat frail and uncomfortable couch, with straight arms and no back — the style which has been made immortal by Madame Récamier, whose superior wit enabled her to pose with exquisite grace on its spidery shape for the portrait by David. A temporary perch at best is such a sofa, agreeable only for the bad quarter of an hour when guests have assembled and dinner has not been announced.

One peculiarity of this style of interest to us is the use of the curved leg, which takes a concave outward sweep from the sofa or table it supports, and which usually terminates in a neat brass claw or a simpler cap. This leg may have originated in

the cornucopia, a modification of that ornate classic form, for its curves are the same. At the opening of the nineteenth century a cabinet-maker named Phyffe identified himself with this leg. He was an American, with a shop in Fulton Street, New York, and his works are highly esteemed by those fortunate enough to possess them.

As mahogany was to Chippendale, so was satinwood to Adam. It was a new wood in his time and especially adapted to his style of work. His method of decoration differed materially from that of his predecessors, for in place of carving his new wood, his embellishment was painting. The effect of classic designs of excessive daintiness executed in soft colours on the golden glow of varnished satinwood has a charm which none can resist. His method was to paint these designs very much after the manner of using inlay, which they were, however, never meant to imitate.

While on the subject of Adam's use of painting, it is pertinent to speak of two or three conspicuous artists whose work he used. One of these was Pergolesi, although his designs were mainly in relief work. Antonio Zucchi, an Italian, was another, and his personality is the more interesting because he it was who won the heart of Angelica Kauffmann, whose ceiling painting for Adam is world-celebrated. A glow of romance always associates itself with this gifted and charming young woman, the friend of

Sir Joshua Reynolds, and lightens the history of her architect master.

Before leaving Adam and his delicate painted furniture, a note must be made of the fact that he frequently employed cane as a panel for the backs of chairs and sofas. The cane-work was not, however, of the coarse modern kind, but was skilfully woven with elegant effect. This is especially true of the rounded panels, where the cane is woven in circles to conform to the wooden frame.

To make American application of the work of this man, the designs we deem essentially colonial are from him, — the oval windows, the spider's web effect in glass or decoration, the festoons of husks, and a hundred other chaste adaptations of classic detail which could never have brought to our forbears more keen artistic delight and appreciation than they do now to us, their descendants, when we spy them in some forgotten doorway or some drawing-room in process of demolition.

Perhaps the esteem in which Robert Adam was held by England is most eloquently expressed by the fact that after his death in 1792 he was buried in Westminster Abbey.

CHAPTER XIII

HEPPLEWHITE

BOOK ISSUED 1789

THESE three men compose a trio of furniture-makers whose names mean more to the American collector than any others, — Chippendale, Hepplewhite, and Sheraton. Strangely enough a confusion seems to exist in the minds of even well-informed persons concerning their individual styles, and herein lies the reason for studying them, that we ourselves may be sage, and that we may give reason for the faith that is in us.

Great underlying principles are expressed in these three designers, and when they are understood, there ought not to be confusion as to their work. Hepplewhite and Sheraton were contemporaries; both were drawing from the same sources of inspiration (and not above imitating one another); there is often a marked similarity between them. But they are in most cases distinguishable, and it is a part of the pleasure of study to arrive at means of making these distinctions where difference is slight.

To sum it up very simply and briefly, the great actuating principle of Chippendale's work was the

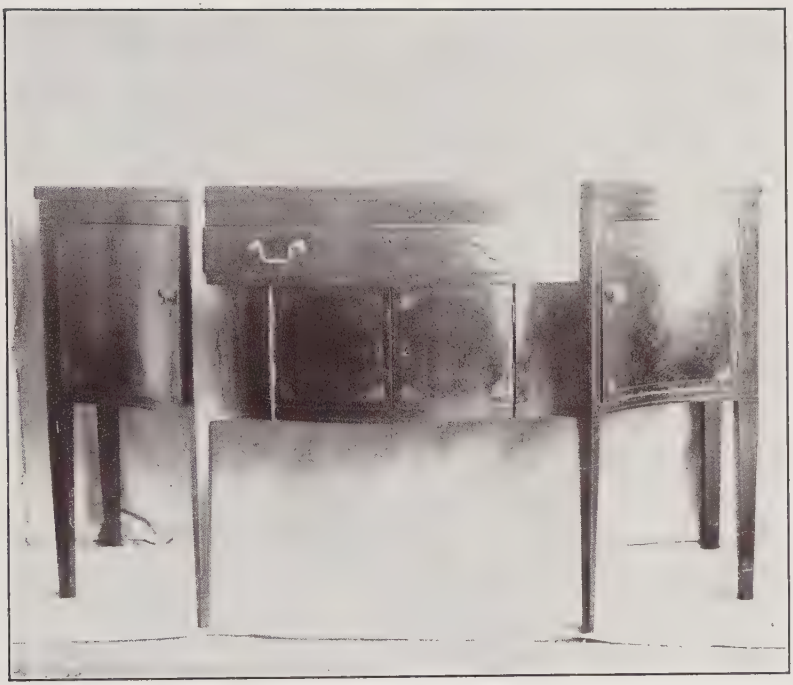


Fig. 102. HEPPLEWHITE SIDEBOARD

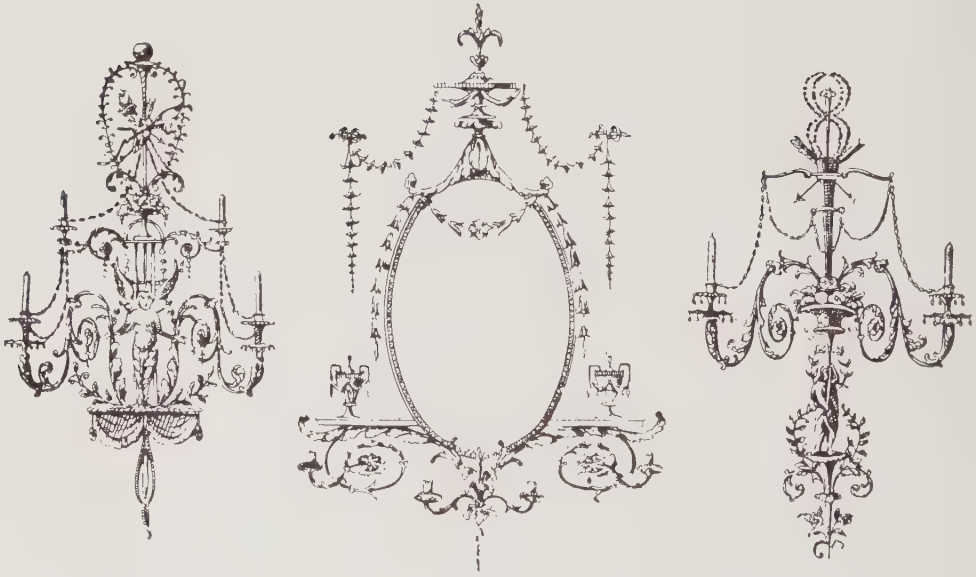


Fig. 103. A—HEPPLEWHITE WINDOW SEAT. B.—HEPPLEWHITE GIRANDOLES

style in vogue in France at the time he lived and worked and drew fashion to his shop in St. Martin's Lane. That style was the one we call Louis Quinze — the crooked style, as a discriminating young lady of my acquaintance denominates it.

By the same inclination to turn to France for things decorative, we see that Hepplewhite and Sheraton found their inspiration in the succeeding French style, the Louise Seize, or the straight style, according to the same discriminating young lady alluded to above. The point of difference between the two men lies here, that Hepplewhite coming first, retained some of the methods of Chippendale, amidst whose furniture he had probably been brought up and educated. Hepplewhite is best described as the link between the rococo and the classic, — taking these terms in their English decorative definition, not in their purity.

We have seen that the Adam brothers preceded these others in adopting the classic idea, and perhaps there is reason for including them in the group of names. But the Adams are better known as architects and decorators than as furniture-makers, consequently their works are not found on this side of the ocean, as are Hepplewhite's and Sheraton's. Their furniture is imported now by private individuals, and a delicate bit of the Adams' glowing satinwood can be seen illuminating its grim Elizabethan prison-mates in the crowded storerooms of

the best dealers. But to discover thus is a widely different matter from finding it in attics or from inheriting it from a mother's great-aunt, the pieces having associated themselves with the very bodies and souls of our people, as well as with the history of our country. It is this actual acquaintance with old furniture that endears it, and gives supreme value to what is loosely called Colonial furniture.

The Adam brothers, as we know, gave inspiration to architecture on this side of the water, and for this we are grateful. But Chippendale, Hepplewhite, and Sheraton gave us the actual pieces which lent to that architecture the sweet graces of home.

In studying the furniture of these styles it must always be borne in mind that each maker had his followers, that, in fact, these men set the mode for all the less famous workers. Also that furniture was made in our own country at very early times, and that this aimed at no flights of originality, but copied the English models.

Another matter: life was far less elegant here than in the mother country — except among the few rich men of the thrifty North and the spendthrift South — and therefore furniture was simpler. It belongs to the same genus as the more elaborate pieces, however, and as its foundation principle, its artistic thought, was the same, it is easily allotted to its genus.

There was made, therefore, in both England and

America, a large quantity of simple furniture in the styles we are considering, and it is not incorrect to call these after the name of the originator of these styles. To have turned out as much furniture as is called Chippendale would have obliged the great designer to run a modern factory with all its substitutes for hand labour.

Let it be understood, then, that we name pieces after the great originators who never saw them, because these pieces are the result of their inspiration. If a piece is actually made by one of these great masters its pedigree is generally known. Especially true is this in England, where families have not our vagrant habits of migration, and where furniture stands unmoved for generations. The prices brought by such pieces at sales are high beyond belief when we consider how entirely unappreciated they were thirty years ago.

Like all important designers of the eighteenth century, Hepplewhite gave to the world in book form his choicest original designs of furniture, and after the custom of the time he introduced architectural instruction for the betterment of the craftsman. Those of us who merely lounge in easy chairs, and do not make them, are pleased at the serious way in which Hepplewhite and his confrères draw them in perspective, and studied for their perfection the orders of architecture. We are also in our generation highly entertained at the quaint bombastic text in

which the author becomes egoist and appears to despise his competitors, after the manner of the circus which always advertised itself as the " greatest show on earth."

To understand Hepplewhite and to fix him in place chronologically, it is well to remember that when he published his book in 1789, Louis XVI had been reigning fifteen years in France, and George III had occupied the English throne for nearly thirty years. On our side of the water independence had been announced, the colonies were States, and Washington was made president. Of all these events, the reign of Louis XVI was the only one which set the key decoratively. The others followed, or if not that, they translated into the natural expression of their own countries the decorative idea of France.

In this we find the reason which many have thought unexplainable of the sudden shift from Chippendale curves to Sheraton severity. All great decorative styles are the expression of some political or religious condition, and we look in vain in England and her colonies to find the reason for this change, but turning our eyes to France, there it lies clearly before us.

Hepplewhite was the first to take the new mode disassociated from architecture. Let us learn, then, those details of his work that will help us to distinguish it from that of his great rival Sheraton.

The first conspicuous mark is found in chairs, in the design for backs known as shield-shape. This

was one of his most distinguished specialties. The shield is of graceful shape, rarely covered with upholstery, but forming an open frame surrounding a central design carved and pierced.

It is urged that Sheraton too used the shield-shaped back, to which the reply is made that as both these men lived and worked shoulder to shoulder, neither was willing to acknowledge to his rival or to the world that he was not prepared to furnish all other designs as well as his own. But there is a marked difference between the chair-backs of the two designers. The shield of Hepplewhite shows across the top one continuous sinuous line, while that of Sheraton is broken by the introduction of an angle.

The design inside the shield is of infinite variety, following sometimes the classic, sometimes the curving upright slats of Chippendale, and is executed in the style of low relief carving which prevailed in Chippendale's time. Indeed, it is in this carving and in the free use of mahogany that Hepplewhite clings to the style which his replaced.

The device of three feathers is often seen to form the central ornament, and thereby hangs a tale political, graven on the wood. There were two parties then, be it remembered, the Court party and the Prince's party, and it is easy to see which one was indicated by the usual emblem of the Prince of Wales.

To continue with the chair, the legs mark the next

strong point of difference between this and the preceding style. The cabriole has disappeared, utterly routed, gone from France, abolished in England. In its place we have a square shaft of pleasing delicacy tapering slightly to the floor. Here again we must say that although this is the rule that determines in most cases, yet Hepplewhite was known to produce the turned leg characteristic of Sheraton. In these cases the style must be determined by an examination of the back or arms, if arms there be.

The armchairs of the time were of two sorts, two extremes, one might say. That most easily called to mind is the capacious wing-chair or ear-chair, that promises shelter and repose, and even serves hiding children as the invisible cloak of fairyland. As much as Hepplewhite avoided upholstery in other seats, on this he has lavished so much that nothing of the frame is visible but the square taper legs of mahogany, with under-framing.

The other armchair is a combination of lightness and elegance, a seat in which one may discourse of State affairs and fashion, a chair in which taste and intellect receive more nourishment than the body receives of languorous repose. When tired men of those days wished forty winks, or Mistress Dorothy wanted to read a romance to the accompaniment of a box of "Turkish delight," it is probable that these luxury loving persons took their sweets to the armchair.

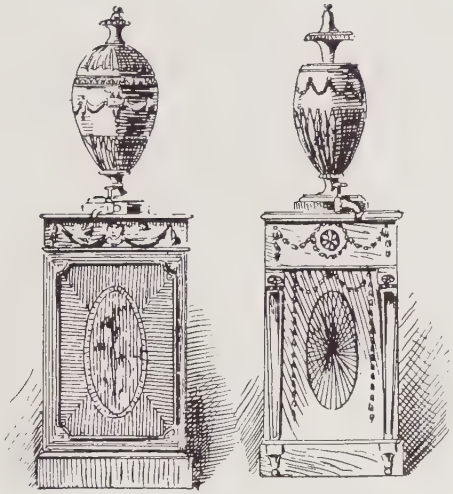
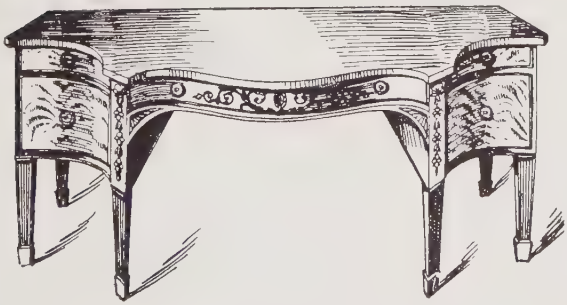


Fig. 104. A—HEPPLEWHITE PEDESTALS.



B—HEPPLEWHITE SIDEBOARD

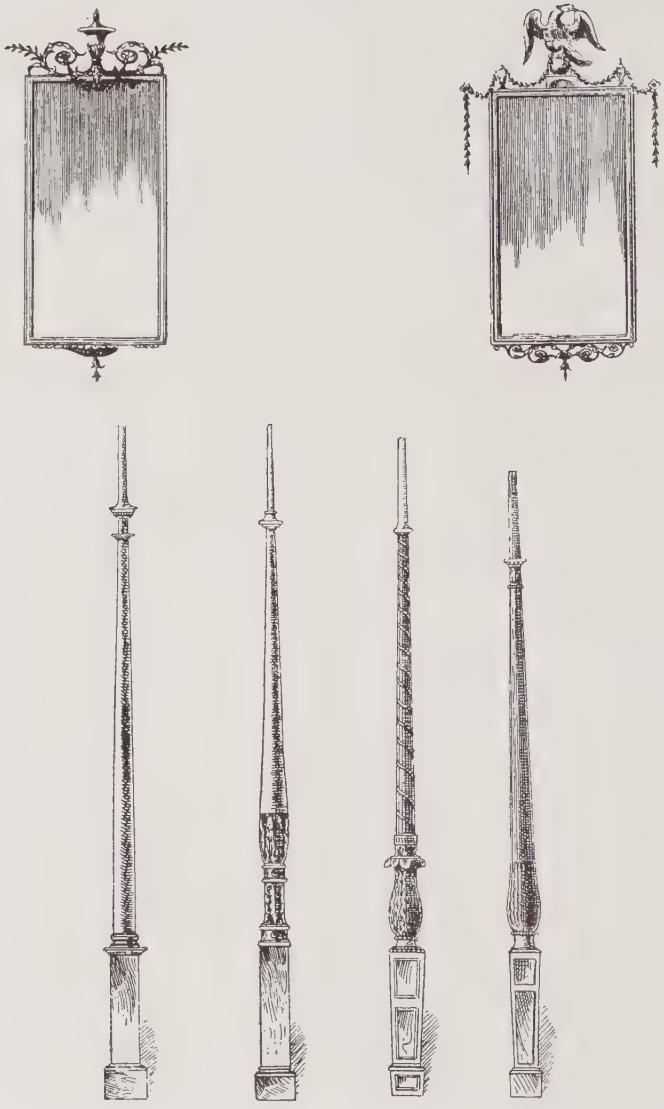


Fig. 105. A and B—HEPPLEWHITE GIRANDOLES. C—HEPPLEWHITE BED PILLARS

The backs of the characteristic armchair were of carved wood, resembling in every particular the backs of others. The shield prevails, and as usual rests on subtly drawn supports which blend with the general curve while giving an idea of strength and harmony. The arms are worth examination, as their manner differs from that of Sheraton. The forward part is not formed of a rigid upright, but sweeps downward and forward, carrying the lower part of the arm near the front leg, and sometimes entirely to it. It is pertinent to add that, graceful as is this method, Sheraton's was more effective, he forming a straight upright from the floor to the top of the arm. In other words, the front of the arm terminated in an upright which rested on the front leg as on a post, both making one continuous line like an attenuated bed-pillar.

It is rather a shock to our modern prejudices to read in Hepplewhite's book that the material recommended for covering his dainty and elegant chairs was horse-hair cloth. The word at first thought means the abominable gloom of shiny black surface which hid an army of minute spears all attacking the defenceless half-hosed legs of childhood. But the modern upholsterer is showing us now what the old makers used, a material, harsh to baby flesh, it is true, but in good colours, striped or figured quaintly in the weaving. With such were the chairs of Hepplewhite covered.

To hold the material firm and to further the ornament of the chair, the covering was held down with close rows of small brass-headed nails, sometimes in rows, sometimes in waving lines. Hepplewhite in his book says that chairs may be painted or japanned "with minuter parts of the ornaments generally thrown in by the painter." Judging by the delicate good taste of these minuter parts we conclude that chair painters were more liberal and more trustworthy craftsmen then than now. Before leaving the subject of chairs it should be said that in addition to carving, a fine line of inlay was used, and also painting in a design of husks. This applies particularly to the legs.

Sofas at this time grew longer, and the reason for this was probably the ease with which the length could be supported without injuring the design. Four legs were harmoniously placed across the front. The front line of the seat and the top of the back were drawn in a gentle curve, a fading reminiscence of a past style. For the most part they were upholstered, but the temptation to use shields led Hepplewhite into arranging a row of them to form a sofa back.

In contrast to these fairly comfortable sofas were the slightly built window-seats spoken of in the chapter on the Adams' style, those delicate affairs which suit only the daintiest of forms and the most transitory occupation. They were then used as window-

seats, and were called such, but in our modern living we put them in the middle of the room where the lame and the lazy avoid them. Those of Hepplewhite do not differ from those of Adam.

The girandoles and mirrors of Hepplewhite are of infinite interest to us, for we see in them the parents of what we fondly call American antiques. Hepplewhite took a leaf from Adam's book in designing the gilt girandoles which express all attenuated grace. They faintly follow the classic and speak eloquently of the colonies and the First Administration. Adam introduced what was called compo work in place of carving, and this was used in decorating mirror frames. In the desire to be chaste in style, the tendency of the day veered towards aerial effects, and these were gained by festoons of compo husks, strung on wire and draped from place to place on the more solid part of the design. These mirrors are not as common in our country as are heavier ones, but are not unknown and are much copied.

The young man alluded to before, who called his Hepplewhite sideboard a Chippendale, would never have made that mistake if he had known that sideboards were not known in the time of Chippendale. Cupboards and tables were undoubtedly used and the corner cupboard known as a beaufet, but the sideboard as we know it now was developed in England by Hepplewhite. Its evolution is one of those pro-

cesses based on need and on logic that never fail to interest.

The dining-room in the time of George III became a place for more daintiness of feasting than hitherto. Wants became more numerous, and living more elegant and complicated. The simple accommodation of a generous table was not enough for the needs of the manners of the day. And so the side table received help.

Its first aid was the pedestal, a sort of cupboard like a square column, but fitted with interior conveniences. The table was flanked with two of these pedestals, one arranged as plate-warmer, the other to hold bottles and decanters. To finish the top and increase both service and ornament, a graceful urn capped each pedestal, lined with zinc to hold hot water, on one side, for the quick cleansing of small silver which was scarce and costly in those days, the other urn being filled with ice for the cooling of drinks. It is needless to dwell on the beauty of these urns, nor on their exquisite workmanship, for that is self-evident. Unhappily they are too rare nowadays for us to be very familiar with them.

To complete this elaborate style of sideboard were two knife-boxes beautifully executed, standing on either side of the table; over the centre of the group hung a gilt girandole of elegance and grace. It would be difficult to surpass in symmetry or beauty this early sideboard of Hepplewhite. It is possible

the change he instituted came from a demand for something less costly, for when inlay and painting were added to the careful cabinet work, the expense was considerable.

The first attempt at simplifying was the addition of small cupboards or drawers to the ends of the table, doing away with the necessity of the knife-boxes. The next step was to increase the accommodations of the table and dismiss the pedestal altogether, making, in fact, a union of pedestal and table, the sideboard as we know it.

The sideboards of Hepplewhite stand before us as the oldest we know, and as the most admired. They are usually mahogany, although lighter woods are used as panels. The notable features are their lightness of construction, their smooth surfaces free from the projections of mouldings, their square, taper legs and their delicate ornament in inlay.

But all these things are true of the sideboards of Sheraton, contemporary and rival of Hepplewhite, so how is one to be known from another? By a very simple rule and one that shows Hepplewhite's application of utility. When he first began to elaborate the table, he curved inward the face of the cupboard, for the greater convenience of the servant, as the pedestal still stood alongside. Therefore his sideboards will always be known by the convexity of their front toward the sides. In his book there is not a single exception to this rule. The reverse of this

pattern is true of Sheraton, all his sideboards having the outward swell on the side section. These sideboards all have six legs, four across the front, and it is between the two to right and left of the centre that these significant curves show themselves.

Those, then, who would know how to distinguish these sideboards have but to remember this simple rule, and mistakes are impossible. The same rule of curves applies to nothing else, however, for in card tables, pier tables and others, both men used this line which commenced with an inward bend and then swept outward with sinuous grace.

In a ramble among curiosity shops, one sometimes runs across a tea-caddy of this time, a box of considerable size, not a small affair, of old Canton or silver. Hepplewhite designed many of these which were a necessity in the days when tea was so precious that servants were never allowed the care of it. The Dutch introducing tea through their trade with China in 1660 imported more freely in the following years, but even at the time of Hepplewhite it was a costly luxury. It was at this time that Boston was having its celebrated Tea-party, and brewing for England a costly cup of tea.

Fig. 106. A—HEPPLEWHITE TABLE. B—HEPPLEWHITE SHIELD-BACK CHAIR
(*Collection of Henry H. Kohn.*) C—HEPPLEWHITE CHAIRS

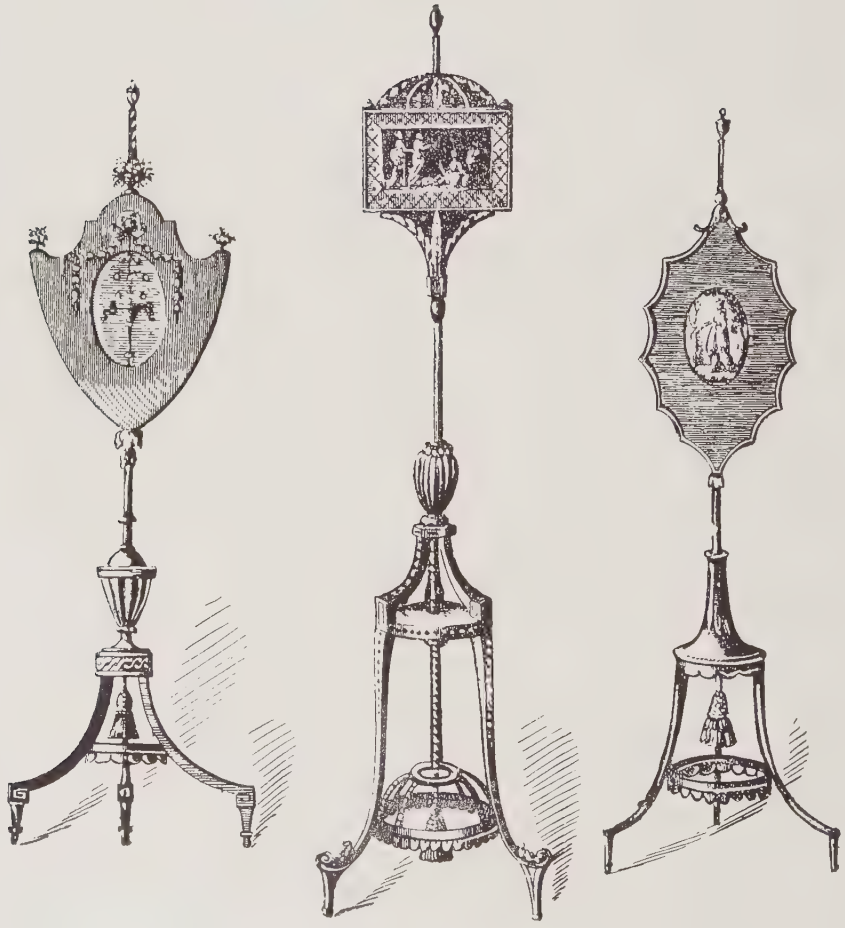


Fig. 107. SHERATON SCREENS

CHAPTER XIV

SHERATON

END OF EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

A MAN'S works were all the public cared for in the days when Sheraton was living sadly and working indefatigably. We are different now, more humane than the people of that extravagant voluptuous time in England, when with George III on the throne the court was stolidly moral and the aristocracy, laughing in its silken sleeve at such stupid virtue, continued the extravagance and debauchery it had learned under George II.

Moreover, at that time the world was made for the fine lady and the fine gentleman, and of all others they seemed to be saying, " Ces gens-la, ils n'existent pas." It was a time when humility played its part to excess, when men great in achievement bent the knee to aristocracy, laughed at its jokes, wept at its praise, and altogether proved themselves of no value except to serve the exalted beings born in the charmed congregation of the nobility. These fine people accepted, however, with noble condescension all the results of talent that contributed to the embellishment of their

ornamental lives, although the individual himself counted for nothing.

Of this class was Thomas Sheraton. He had company enough in those days when all the world strove to please a sated few, but his case always brings a sympathetic tug at the heart strings, for his poverty and the sensitive nature which was possibly its cause. Of Chippendale we think without sentiment, talented, industrious, but commercially wise. Sheraton had a talent as fine, an industry as unflagging, but with it a gentle conscientious nature which sought retirement rather than conspicuousness and which contributed not at all to financial success.

In place of a fashionable shop made an open club by all the gay folk in town, Sheraton was hid in a quiet neighbourhood where he studied exhaustively, and worked with conscience. His style was not exclusively his own, for if the history of furniture shows anything it shows that the times clamour for expression and all artists of the moment express the nation's momentary thought. The evidence of true talent is found in using the common expression, and engrafting thereon the inspired originality that is the precious jewel of the gifted. Sheraton's work is sufficiently similar to that of the Adam brothers and of Hepplewhite to be recognised as belonging to the second half of the eighteenth century, yet it has its distinguishing marks.

It is not to be supposed from a neglect to mention

them, that this time was not rich in other skilled designers and craftsmen. Chief among these was Shearer, who published a book in 1788; Matthias Darley, and George Richardson. But Sheraton surpasses them as Chippendale surpassed his imitators.

It is not difficult to see the character of Sheraton in his work, which speaks ever of honesty and refinement, as well as a scholarly acquaintance with art and mathematics. He was himself a man of great cultivation, with strong doctrinal inclinations, an ascetic in living. His coats were threadbare, his table scant, and his home in smoky Soho. What meagre accounts exist of this famous man fill us with pity for him that his greatness was so little recognised by himself, and so little rewarded financially. He was by nature a draughtsman and mathematician, and united the two in his exhaustive details for furniture making. His tastes made of him a student and he wrote with elegant facility.

It is plain that he was no ordinary mechanic, and had he not lived in a time when only the fine gentleman received notice, he would have ranked high. His posthumous fame is as great now as that of any maker of great style; he is dear to the hearts of American home-makers, but his rewards in life were meagre. His attempts to build up a profitable business in London met with such scant success that he abandoned it for the drawing of designs for others to copy. The pathos of unchanging poverty clings

to him and conveys a futile wish that we, who so strongly appreciate his worth, might in some way alleviate the trials long past.

"To unite with usefulness the taste of the times," was the desire set forth in his book. The taste of the times was the Louis Seize style, and Sheraton, therefore, made an adaptation of the fashion of the court of Marie Antoinette. It is by knowing the characteristics of this chastest period of French decorative art that one can the more easily identify the work of Sheraton, allowing of course for the greater restraint of the English temperament.

A feature by which his furniture is generally known is the round leg, fluted or reeded or otherwise embellished, just the leg seen on the furniture of Louis Seize. But this leg he by no means confined himself to, and thus many are led into error. I have had owners of Sheraton sideboards pronounce them Hepplewhite on account of the fallacy that Sheraton legs are always round. The same mistake is made with the tables which appear in such infinite variety at this time, and on which Sheraton used both the rounded legs and the tapered square.

It was mainly in chairs that Sheraton used the rounded leg always without under-framing, and also in his after-work bordering on the Empire which will be considered later. In armchairs the effect of this rounded leg, from which the arm rises in beautiful completeness of design, is a charming decorative

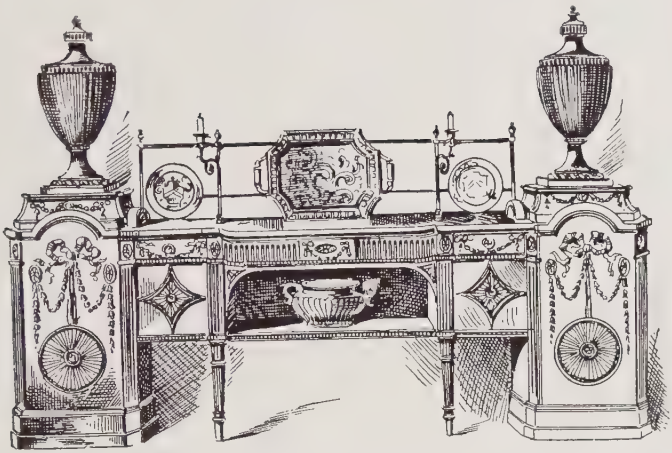


Fig. 108. SIDEBOARD. SECOND HALF XVIII CENTURY

Fig. 109. SHERATON SIDEBOARD

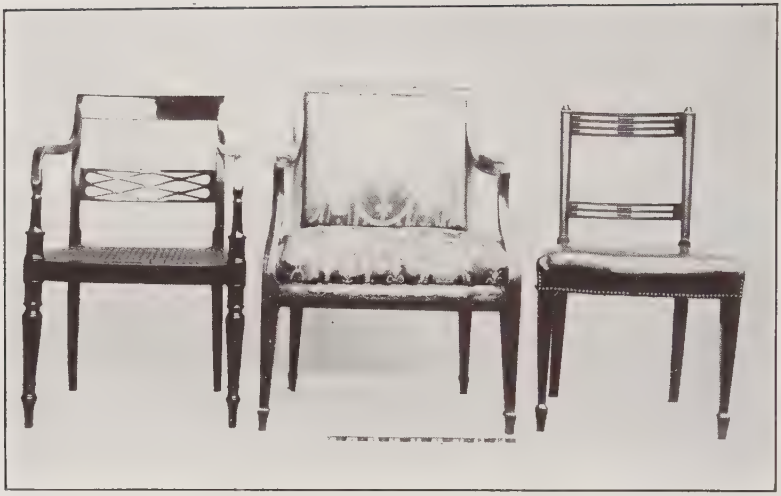


Fig. 110. A—SHERATON CHAIRS. B—CHAIRS AFTER SHERATON

feature, one that never loses sight of utility nor of proper construction. These chairs when found in our country are often accredited to French origin and looked on as dainty aliens which have thrust their pretty selves into soberer society.

The chair-back is full of individuality. It resembles Chippendale in nothing except the open carving, and exceeds Hepplewhite in delicacy. It shows so strong a tendency to the upright that the most marked examples are formed of three straight ornamented bars surrounded with the frame. For purposes of identification this is a safe rule to follow, although poet's license must be given to allow for the impulses of the artist. The tendency to use the urn shape as a motive is less marked in Sheraton than in his contemporary Hepplewhite. Chairs were made of mahogany and of satinwood.

Sofas of Sheraton's are long and simple in shape, with very little curving, but with a most pleasing elegance. The legs are like those of chairs, almost invariably round, and four are placed across the front. An unbroken frame of wood extends from the top of the front leg to form the arms and to outline the back which is rectangular. Sofas of this kind are not uncommon in our country, but usually their owners know them not. Perhaps they may read this book and learn the value of the piece they now speak of with a non-committal, "I don't know what that is — just an old thing I picked up cheap."

A study of Sheraton's book shows that very few of his more elaborate pieces have come to us on this side of the water, but that our people imported the simpler furniture which reflected his style. Sheraton himself aimed at meeting the demand for simple things, although furnishing at the same time designs suitable for the extravagance of England. Most familiar to us are the little tables of infinite variety with which he and Hepplewhite and their imitators flooded the New World. They are inimitably dainty, these tables, with their smooth, uncarved surfaces and delicate decoration of line inlay or husks. Their characteristic taper legs have been criticised as thin and weak in effect. Perhaps they are, but to us who love them they speak of gentle grace and chaste refinement. It is true that tables of this sort do not " furnish " as much as the heavier sort, but they are sufficiently rare to be cherished as *bibelots*.

The tops of tables vary greatly in shape and manner. Various contrivances are arranged for increasing the size by means of leaves, which either drop down, or are the counterpart of the semicircular or oblong top on which they are reversed. The favourite straight line is rarely ever seen on these table-tops which are most graceful and piquant in outline.

Sheraton regarded the table-top as a field for decoration, as many another artist in furniture has done to the perplexity of womankind which is torn by two

minds, the wish to expose the decoration and the desire to lay things down. Sheraton used inlay of a delicately classic sort, fans, too, for simple work, but for his finest pieces employed Angelica Kauffmann to paint thereon one of her rich fancies. One can easily imagine her friend, Sir Joshua, bending over the smooth, glossy surface of such a table, praising and criticising in the elegantly formal language of the day.

The tables designed especially for card playing, with recesses for coin, suggest the amusements of that profligate time when the aristocracy, bored with the court of "Farmer George," found in the prince and his racy amusements the excuse for laxity. It makes good reading now, the accounts of fair ladies who grew avaricious over the game, of gallant gentlemen who drank and gambled away their estates all for "the honour of a gentleman." The interpretation of gentleman in the days when elbows were leaned on Sheraton's tables had little to do with either gentleness or manliness. Honour, too, had its perverted meaning, being vain and sensitive, sustaining pride more than virtue. However that may be, the people of that day seem to glow with undying vitality, and add to it a dash and charm that is never found in modernity.

But if belles and beldames, fops and sycophants gathered around these tables, so also did lovely black-haired Sarah Lennox, eloquent Burke, Beau Brum-

mel, and Horace Walpole, who himself was such a lover of old furniture that the fame of his Strawberry Hill collection will never end. Besides these we have Burgoyne, "tripping off from St. James' street to conquer the Americans, and slinking back into the club somewhat crestfallen after his beating." And around these Sheraton tables with their spindly supports gathered also in the New World the men who made our history, who fought and thought and drew up constitutions — Washington, Lafayette, Franklin, and all the noble followers.

Perhaps the most loved legacy of Sheraton in this country is the sideboard. Its beauty is unquestioned, and fortunate indeed are the owners of one of these graceful conveniences. That so many are found in our country shows the quick growth of wealth among the newly independent States, and the increase in luxury, an increase that has accelerated with the years until the conservative see in it a future menace.

Sideboards were only side-tables previous to the time of Hepplewhite and Sheraton, but the time had come when quick and elegant serving was a necessity in a gentleman's household. The convex corner of Hepplewhite was avoided by Sheraton, who was of the two the better artist, the greater student, and who had a talent for inventing conveniences. His corner was always convex, thus giving more space to the cupboard or drawers at the end. And, as said before, this is the distinguishing mark be-

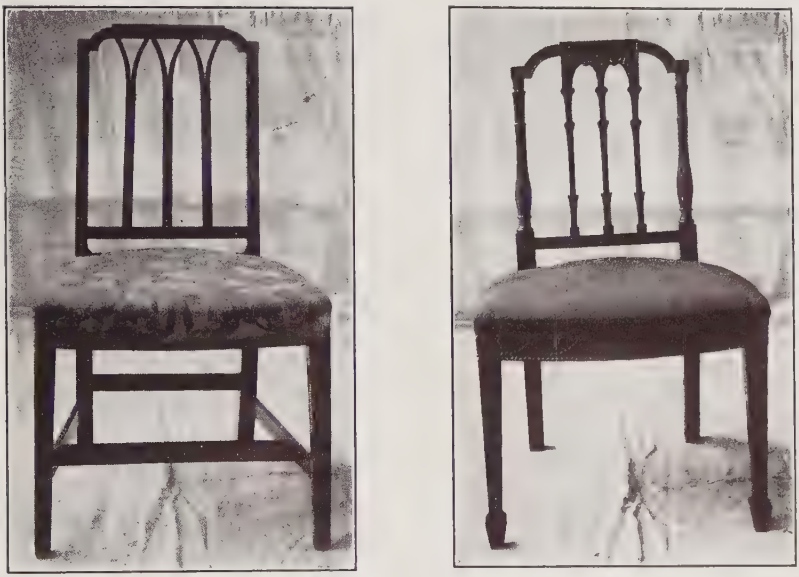


Fig. 111. A—SHERATON CHAIR. B—SHERATON CHAIR
Collection of Henry H. Kohn

Fig. 112. SHERATON DESK AND TABLE, 1780

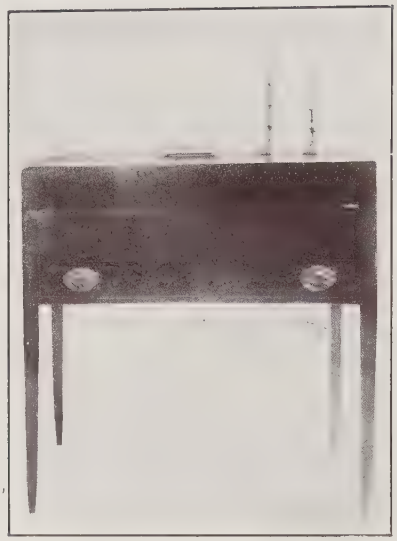


Fig. 113. A—SHERATON DESK. B—SHERATON TABLE. C—SHERATON DOUBLE CHAIR

tween the two. All unite in having four taper legs dividing up the front space.

Silver and such small conveniences were put within drawers, but as plate was increasing in amount, Sheraton often affixed a decorative frame of brass at the back as a support.

The dining-table made of two parts to form a round, with tapering legs, and the dainty sideboard call to mind the elegant hospitality which prevailed on both sides of the water, in England and in her lost colonies. Chippendale wares speak of colonial times, but these delicate fancies of Sheraton were the taste of the high-minded ladies and gentlemen of both North and South when national independence was new and uncertain, social conditions a trifle disordered and the wisdom of Washington questioned by political opponents.

Houses were heated by open fires then, and screens a necessity. Sheraton's fancy led him to make many of the little pole-screens that protected the fair bright cheeks of Sir Joshua Reynolds' beauties, but which prevented no gazing into the glowing coals. Horse-hair screens were equally popular, but less graceful.

This was a time when all persons of social prominence affected, if they did not feel, an interest in literary matters, when man wrote rhymes to the charms of his *innamorata*, and woman replied in piquant verse. Notes flew about in Vanity Fair like flocks of Venus' doves, and everyone aimed at ease in writing.

It was but natural then that the desk should be an article of furniture much in demand.

Sheraton devoted himself to two kinds of desks, the bureau-bookcase and the trifling affair of the boudoir. The former gets its name from the French, where bureau has the wide significance of important affairs. Its noble intent was to provide in one piece all the necessities of the man of literary tastes or the gentleman of estates. A combination of desk and bookcase was then considered a piece of furniture which added distinction to a home, and at once placed its owner above challenge intellectually or socially.

The desk half was commodious, with large drawers for the storing of papers, accounts and stationary, with a wide drop leaf for the accommodation of elbows. Above this was an ever varied arrangement of pigeon-holes, infinitesimal drawers, and above all of secret drawers. Indeed, no desk of the time was considered complete without the latter. When letters and poems of a sentimental nature were being written and received, a place must be provided against the prying eye. It was in ingenious contrivances for this and other purposes that Sheraton revelled, working them all out with mathematical precision and executing them with that genius that has its foundation in a limitless capacity for taking pains.

The top of the bureau-bookcase was what its name

implies, an arrangement of shelves for books. Surely no arrangement could be better than this, that one may, while writing, lift the hand to the book wanted for reference, an address, or for correct orthography. The front was protected by glass doors, made beautiful by tracery of wood in a style closely resembling designs of Hepplewhite, but differing from them in dealing more freely with curves. Sometimes the bookcase was no more than a top to the desk; in other instances it was a large affair to cover half the side of a room, with the desk in the centre.

Hepplewhite is called deficient in the designing of the pediment which so often crowned these large pieces of furniture, but Sheraton revived for their completion the broken pediment in use in Queen Anne's time, and is also known for the swan-neck pediment which differs only in the turn of the curve.

In contrast to the serious appearance of the bureau-bookcase is the trifling elegance of the lady's desk. On this pretty thing Sheraton let his fancy play, and by means of springs and panels, drawers and leaves made an affair as complicated as possible, lacking nothing but commodiousness. The word writing-table might better describe some of these slight affairs.

Sheraton is responsible for the style of desk known as kidney shape, and of many knee-hole designs with flat tops.

A reminder of his painstaking is found in the small wares of the day, in the little things we delight in finding in the shop of the dealer in antiques on this side of the Atlantic. In this class are the little toilette glasses perched on a drawer intended to complete the dressing-bureaus of the day. Both Hepplewhite and Sheraton made these and decorated them with the tiny line of inlay that was their specialty in simple ornamentation.

The liqueur case was another compact convenience, filled with bottles and glasses, thin and richly gilded on the top. Little secretaries which shut close and formed a non-committal box for the guarding of correspondence showed another phase of ingenuity. Knife-boxes, urns and tea-caddies we have already noticed, but too much cannot be said about the beauty of their execution, their exquisite defeat of all the purposes of wood through curving veneer into rounded outlines.

In a final summing up it may be said that the styles of Sheraton are honest styles, speaking of high morality, and cultivation on the part of their designer. The construction is honest, usually square, and without tricks of light and shadow made by projecting ornament. Its beauty is its chasteness and the perfection of craftsmanship lavished upon it. To reproduce it to-day, without omitting its atmosphere of poetry which the touch of the human hand alone can give, is so nearly impossible under modern

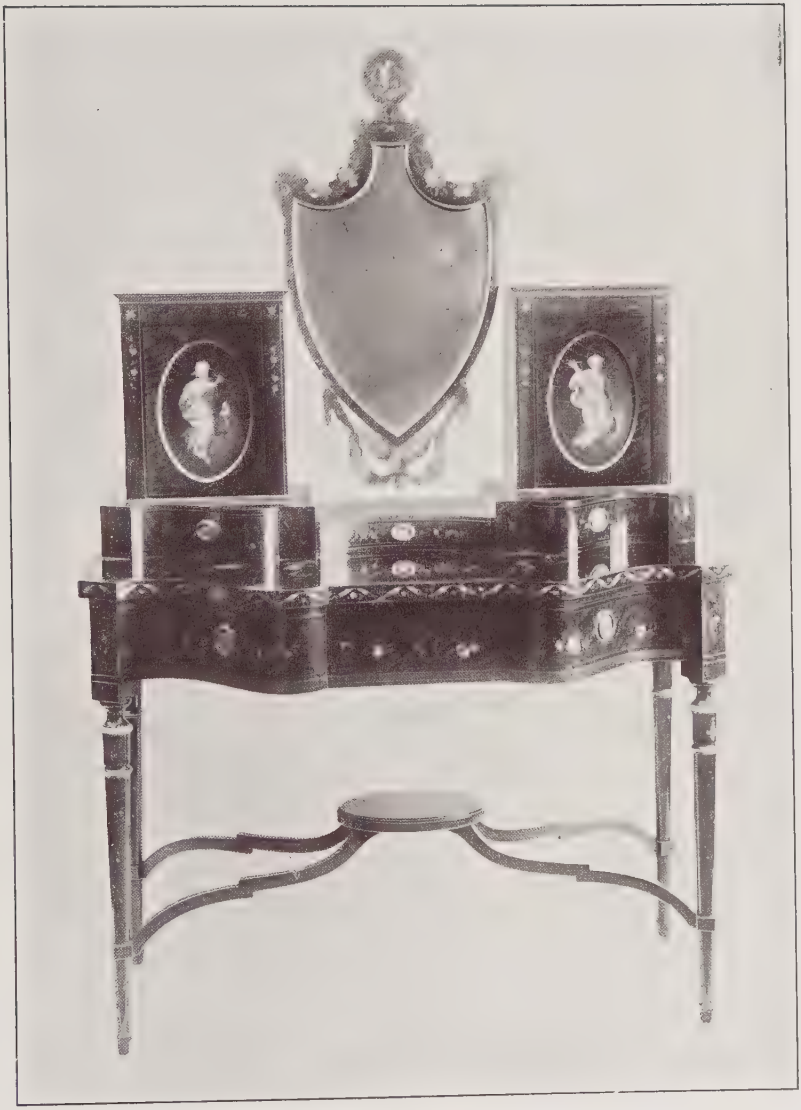


Fig. 114. SATINWOOD DRESSING TABLE, 1800
(Painted by Angelica Kauffman)

Fig. 115. DESK AND BOOKCASE. 1790

methods that we value immeasurably the old examples left us.

What were the rooms like in which the chaste furniture of Hepplewhite and Sheraton was displayed? These two men were not as general in the application of their talents as were the brothers Adam, confining themselves exclusively to furniture. But their designs were in absolute harmony with the dainty and attenuated drawing of interior decoration.

The note struck was that of the refined classic, and this note was sounded into thinness. Rooms left to the decorators were cold, almost meagre in flat, scant wood-work and an elimination of architectural effect. Italian artists acquired great popularity in England at this time, but while bringing with them their exuberant pencils they left behind their warmth of temperament, and so we find the decorations of Pergolesi fine but elaborately thin, adding little of that sense of hospitality that should be the *sine qua non* of every drawing-room.

With the dado shrunken, the cornice minimised and the pilaster replaced by a tracery, rooms looked cold and formal, but the saving grace of these salons were the paintings inserted in panels. Angelica Kauffmann was painting for ceilings and side walls, and Cipriani was also at work. Large scenes in warm rich colours, of designs suggesting all sorts of mythological memories, enriched these rooms

which were set with the furniture of Hepplewhite and Sheraton.

Windows were draped with silks in bright colours and small formal designs, and with furniture similarly covered a look artistic and chaste was imparted. As England set the styles for America, so we followed to the best of our growing ability.

CHAPTER XV

ENGLISH AND AMERICAN EMPIRE

BEGINNING OF NINETEENTH CENTURY

THE heading of this chapter signifies the author's approval of much that is the outcome of this style. Debased Empire is what the prejudiced British critic calls it in his condemnation, but such critics have less reason to feel tenderness towards the style than we who love it for its associations with old American homes.

A glance at its causes is not inappropriate. With a style as perfect as that in vogue at the close of the eighteenth century, with Chippendale just behind it, and with Jacobean and Tudor styles to suggest the Renaissance, why must England run out of the country for inspiration? Because the habit was strong upon her to turn to France for life's embellishments. And thus she fell into trouble in her decorative arts.

There is wonder in this, for England, as Thackerary reminds us in his captivating story of the Georges, now "had to grapple and fight for life with her gigantic enemy Napoleon." Why then should she turn to him as sycophant and eagerly clutch whatever of his truly personal and bombastic decorations she

could adapt to her own beautification? The answer to that is found in the strange lack of unity between the masses and the classes which unhappily exists the world over, and always will as long as wealth and fashion live.

Napoleon had not been grappled with, fought and vanquished, however, before the styles which were made for the Emperor were dragged across the Channel. He was in full power, and had introduced novelty into decorative art, through the talent of native craftsmen. Fashionable folk in England looked discontented on the coldness of their drawing-rooms, the fine airiness of their dining-rooms and sighed for lavish display; they, too, wanted the warmth of colour, the richness of mere size, the gorgeousness of metal mounts which were giving grandeur to the equipments of Napoleon.

And so the new style was imported into England purely because fashion wanted it. In France it was the expression of an event, of a great thought in history. It was full of meaning, it was a record of conquest, of unprecedented circumstances. But in England it was an alien. Nothing had happened there, no such cataclysm as the Revolution, with the Directory and the Empire growing therefrom. Instead, through all these events George III sat smugly on his throne, kind, dull, stubborn, and there he sat and led his bourgeoise life until these things pass away like a tale that is told.

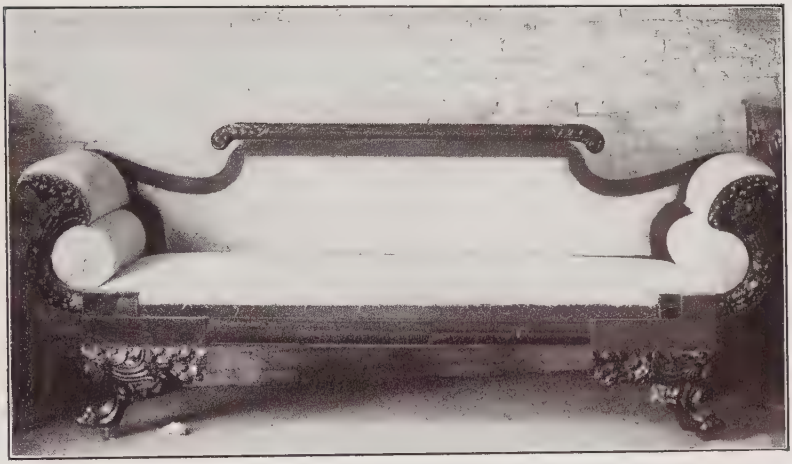
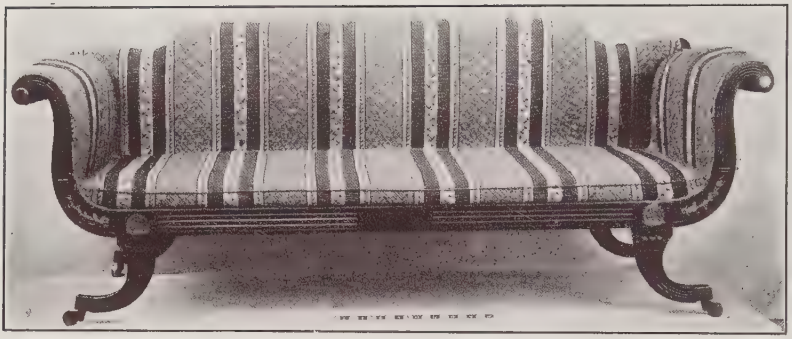


Fig. 116. A—ENGLISH EMPIRE SOFA. B—ENGLISH EMPIRE CHAIRS



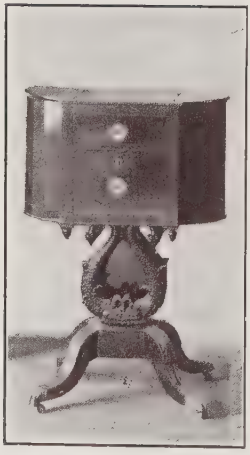


Fig. 117. A—ENGLISH EMPIRE SOFA B—ENGLISH EMPIRE TABLE
C—ENGLISH EMPIRE BUREAU

So the new style was imported without other reason than the desire of fashion to follow the French modes in Paris. But as England had nothing to express of the sort that was inspiring French designers, it is easy to see how the style deteriorated, how the emblems lost meaning and wandered off into the bad lands of perverted taste.

To the story of Sheraton's poverty allusion has been made. It was a condition that increased with his years and his necessities. When, then, the mode changed, he was obliged for the sake of those dependent on him to change with it, and to give to customers what they demanded.

In 1804 and in 1806 he published books of designs so at variance with his previous work that very little of his manner remains for identification. Indeed, I find that very few of these late designs of his are called by his name at all. Perhaps this is well, for at least it prevents confusion and protects his reputation.

Metal mounts being one of the chief characteristics of Empire furniture, they were tried in England but with ever-lessening art. Sheraton's use of them was at least dainty, as he employed them mainly in the shape of finely chiselled feet to terminate the legs of tables, the style where three or four legs branch from a plinth surmounted by a column.

The American maker named Phyffe, who is known to have had a shop in Fulton Street, New York, in

the first years of the nineteenth century, used the same foot, and won some fame by his productions which much resemble this Sheraton-Empire work.

But the chiselling of metal was not a perfected art in England as it had been for so long in France, and after revelling for a time in crudeness it was abandoned for other things, especially carving, which now flourished. The style of carving is unmistakable. It is a heavy relief of naturalistic fruit and flowers, all thickly massed, executed in mahogany, and has a tendency to express itself in the familiar big claw-foot without a ball. This carving was frequently gilded, and those pieces on which the old gilding is not entirely effaced, but glows and blends with the mahogany, are inexpressibly rich in colour.

There is much to condemn in this transplanted style, for it lacks inspiration in its adaptation, and originality (except original sin) is entirely wanting. It lacks every one of the qualities that give charm to the French Empire style. In it a lavish massing of material is substituted for good lines and finely wrought detail.

And yet, it is a style of infinite interest to us because it was largely used here, and largely manufactured. Strangely enough it is called by dealers and by many owners, Colonial, when as a matter of fact it had its vogue more than a quarter of a century after the colonies were States.

It would not be just to our ancestors nor to our-

selves to admit that this style was without artistic merit. The sofa of the time, for example, in its best form, with overflowing cornucopias to form the curve of the arm, large lions' paws and more fruit and flowers to form the legs, and a graceful sweep to the back — this sofa stands comparison with sofas of other styles. If argument is made concerning its discomfort, the reply to that is to use it formally, and seek a lounging place on one of the luxurious down-padded bespringed asylums that belong to our own self-indulgent age of easy manners.

Then there are the pier-tables, with white marble introduced as columns and slabs, and the handsomest of which have a carved base, and inlay which takes the shape of the French ormolu mounts. These are dignified and elegant, and English commentators on domestic art should sheathe criticism in contemplating them. At least they are dear here, where four or five generations of one family have used them.

The upper dilution of Empire styles that was made in America ran largely to the carved pineapple as an ornament, which served a constructional purpose nobly or a decorative one lavishly. In tables both large and small we see it forming the post which rests on a plinth, supported by claws. This style of table is in large size for dining-room use, or in smaller for round centre-tables, or for drop-leaf or for work-tables, and being symmetrical and elegant, is prized with reason.

Bureaus and sideboards show strongly the influence of Sheraton's late designs, and are nearly always fitted with posts or pilasters at the corners, continuing down to form the feet which on the handsomest pieces were claws. Sideboards have four posts across the front, and the middle section is swelled, as are also the bureau fronts. The carving of these posts introduces the pineapple — a natural design, as the fruit came up from San Domingo on the same ships with the mahogany. Twisted posts were a simpler substitute, and sometimes finely reeded ones. Gilded bronze was introduced in the drawer-handles which were unfortunately large and coarse, and had absolutely nothing to recommend them except the always agreeable contrast of gold and mahogany. They were disc-shaped, stamped in the design of an open flower or a lion's head, with ring handle.

The four-post bed had its last days under the reflected Empire style. On this article of furniture the carver spent himself, heaping claws, pineapples, twists, flowers and fruits one upon another to build up the required height. Nor stopped he at that, for both head and foot and tester received their share. The result was an overpowering heaviness, rich in its way, utterly condemnable when compared with similar pieces of French and Italian Renaissance, but — our own, and therefore loved, a little for its massive beauty, much for its associations.

These heavy beds have so often been shown me by

Fig. 118. ENGLISH EMPIRE CONSOLE

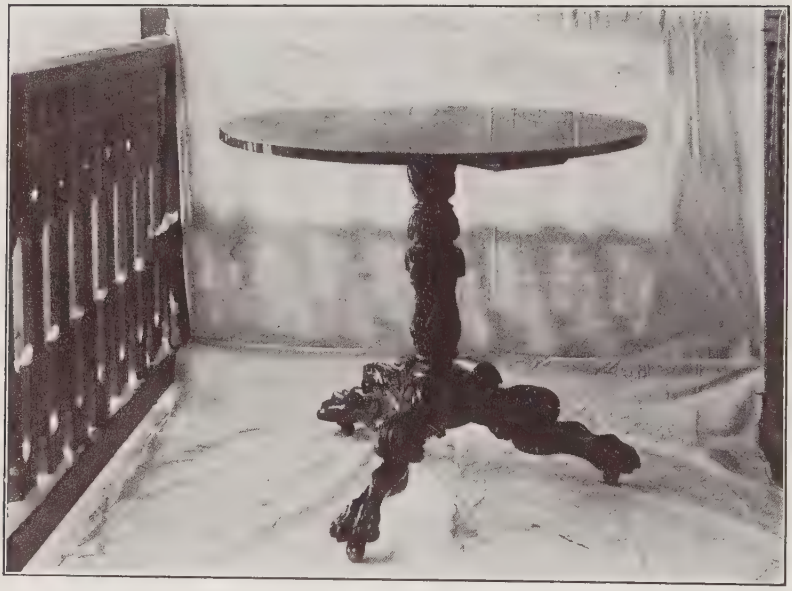


Fig. 119. AMERICAN EMPIRE TABLE
Collection of Henry H. Kohn

those who truly believe them to antedate those with light tapering poles, that I dwell with emphasis on the fact that they belong to Napoleonic times, which abolished the manufacture of light furniture in England and the States.

Mirrors of this time are so persistently called Colonial that it is perhaps pertinent to correct that error here. Mirrors of the earlier times are the lighter and more classic, for now they lose in grace and become showily decorative and heavy, with bulging columns at the ends, the same laid horizontally across the top, and over them a flat pediment. They give a look of old-fashioned elegance to rooms in which they are not inappropriate, but as works of art are not comparable to the delicate mirrors of Sheraton which they displaced.

Sheraton's later chairs pass for Empire here, and few of those who see them ever connect them with the great designer. They are remotely classic, inoffensive but uncomfortable.

But Sheraton's heart was not in this new work as was that of certain other English designers. Gillow became famed for his furniture in both rosewood and mahogany inlaid in flat brass, finished with finely chiselled feet of brass. Thomas Hope, another designer, used the classic effects in an endeavour to be like the French, and followed closely on the commoner designs. Indeed, much of the Empire furniture that comes to America as French is of the same

design as that produced by the best English makers. The simpler craftsmanship they could execute, but the wondrous work of the French chiseller was beyond them, and on that the beauty of the furniture depended.

George Smith was "Upholder Extraordinary to H. R. H. the Prince of Wales," and we are thus reminded of the people for whom this somewhat monstrous style was made, especially of the king's son who preferred weak profligacy to refinement, and whose companions threw dice to the point of bankruptcy, swore eternally, bragged of unspeakable things and ended each worthless day by falling under the table unconscious. But others lived, too, in those days, brave, thrifty Americans, and it is for their sake we like and collect and "point with pride" to the "debased Empire."

There is yet a greater depth of debasement into which the style fell. Indeed, in its dotage it strayed senilely from every saving grace and revelled in mere size and quantity of material. Carving disappeared entirely, and all attempt at ornamentation in brass or gilding. In their place were wide veneered surfaces, and the most meaningless and rudimentary curves. The furniture made at this time was perhaps the most inartistic ever conceived, and that is saying much in view of what the nineteenth century perpetrated later. It is only mentioned here as a warning, and warning is only needed because the small dealers in

old furniture of America are pressing it upon the unwary.

Their reason for so doing is purely commercial, of course. The universal desire to furnish in part with what might be called American antiques has made old furniture extremely difficult for the dealers to obtain. Having scoured hill and plain, garret and stable for oak of the Jacobean time, walnut of Queen Anne, mahogany of Chippendale, Hepplewhite and Sheraton, and carved English Empire, they take the sadly massive dilution of this last style and recommend it for its years. But years alone do not give grace. A form must have had artistic lines and good workmanship, or it can never gain in elegance by accumulation of time. Old things are not elegant and beautiful now that never were so. The clumsy veneered bed with a pieced quilt over it, and a rag mat before it could never have been that. Why then introduce these things into homes from which they were once happily banished?

CHAPTER XVI

L'ART NOUVEAU

ANOTHER change in the government of France has to be recorded, one which had its effect, as usual, on matters decorative. This change was the restoration of the monarchy in France after the banishment of Napoleon.

Seeing how closely the personal note was followed in Empire furniture by its direct advertisement of the initial letter of the Emperor, his triumphs and his personal symbols, it is no wonder that with all possible haste it was got out of the way when his big brief day was past.

But alas, no inspiration came to supply the change with grace and beauty. The State ateliers were no more, and no geniuses announced themselves. France had apparently exhausted her resources, had ended her special Renaissance. To alter the existing style was imperative, as that spoke of something altogether undesirable politically to the royalists, so back turned the eye of the designers to the scrolls and shells of Louis XV.

But, not wishing to make a slavish copy, desiring

Fig. 120. DESK, LATTER HALF XVIII CENTURY

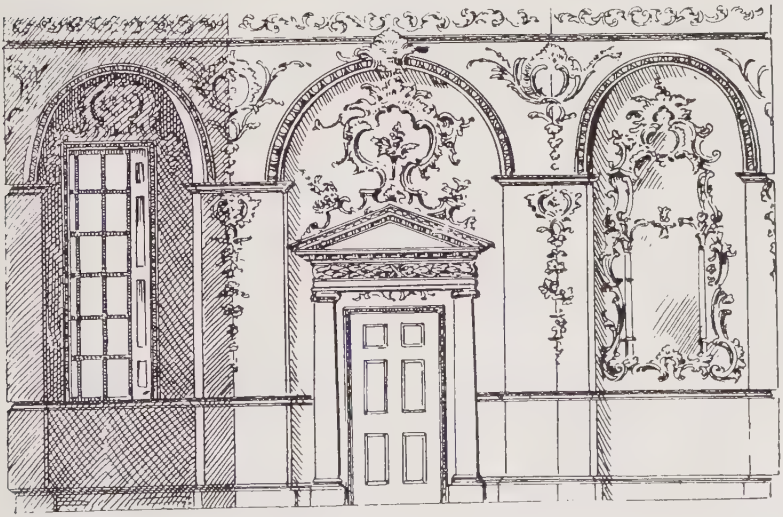


Fig. 121. ENGLISH INTERIOR
Showing Combination of Classic and Louis XV Style

Fig. 122. ANGLE IN NEW SAXON PARLIAMENT HOUSE
Designed by B. Riemerschmied
COURTESY OF THE INTERNATIONAL STUDIO

to display originality perhaps, the result was a weakness and coarseness which is a reproach to the time. This feeble and gilded imitation spread to England as its betters had done, and there, if possible, grew worse. It came easily to America, and still shines forth from many a showy mirror frame or gilded plaster composition which shamelessly confuses the unlearned with its cheap assumption of the elegance of the inspired rococo.

Nothing happening in France which might be copied, England had a little revival of the Gothic style, a mention of which is not out of place, for furniture of this time, too, is being offered in the shops of small dealers as antique. It is in general outline Gothic, but so feebly that it could never be regarded seriously as anything more than the cabinet-makers' attempt to supply the never ending cry for something new.

In 1841 new additions were to be made to the magnificent pile of the Houses of Parliament. Much discussion naturally occurred as to what style the new construction should take. Looking back upon the monstrous exteriors and interiors of the nineteenth century, we can only be happily thankful that the decision was to copy the style already standing. The erection of these buildings was then the cause of the feeble revival of Gothic, which produced the vitiated examples standing in old-fashioned houses as hall chairs, and which are familiar to almost all. It

had its expression in bookcases and in bedroom furniture, but to our educated eyes has no excuse for being.

Still struggling, art tried its hand in several ways, and at the time of the Crystal Palace Exhibition in 1851 produced a laughable effort at elegance, the buncombe papier maché furniture inlaid with mother of pearl in absurd architectural designs, much gilded and lacquered. These, too, the ill-informed farmer antique dealer will offer as of value merely because they have lost chips from their flimsy construction.

If art had gone to sleep, at least mechanics had waked to the cheerful sound of whistling steam. The application of steam to the manufacture of furniture may be responsible for the successive uglinesses that have followed one another in England and America. Whereas everything had hitherto been made by hand, now came a time when nothing was undertaken that could not be executed by machines. Add to this the substitution of black walnut for mahogany, and mankind found itself obliged to keep house with a set of household gods far too ugly to worship. The black walnut period must ever remain a horror to all who remember it. There is balm in the auction records that bedroom sets which cost two hundred and fifty dollars sell for eight, and that occasionally one is knocked down for seventy-five cents. If these prices had prevailed in the first instance, less of this hope-

less stuff would have dulled the artistic sense of an energetic people.

In glancing the length of the past century we can find nothing worthy of perpetuation, no decorative expression of art that time has not proved a mistake. It almost seems as though the artists of the world at last agreed among themselves that the century must not go without the inception of some new style that was to be enduring, and that for that end they gathdere themselves for an effort.

The result is what we call L'Art Nouveau, or New Art, if one likes the English better.

For a long time it was not taken seriously, this new expression much given to swirls and curls; it was looked on as an ephemeral fancy, classed with novelties and expected to go the way of all such. But it has not gone, it has stayed, and insists that it is going to develop as great a seriousness as any of the lasting styles.

It had its beginning at least twenty years ago, in the days of London's "aesthetes," when limp dress and posing were the mode; and, if artists did not actually "walk down Piccadilly with a poppy or a lily" in the hand, or breakfast off a prolonged stare at an orchid in a glass of water, they at least adored trailing inertness and pale colours. Vigorous William Morris then appeared, and wrote and designed and put more force into decoration, and others followed him.

But the really great matter that was accomplished was the turning to nature for inspiration instead of copying and re-copying all that had gone before. And this source of inspiration is now agreed upon by all artists of no matter what country. It is the one idea that makes unity between them and tends towards the artistic advancement of all. With the same source of inspiration, the whole world works in unison, and decorative art in its latest expression belongs to one nation no more than another. Each man may watch the progress of his fellows and either admire or condemn, to the improvement of his own similar work. This in itself is a tremendous stimulus, more so as each nation shows differing tendencies, based, as always, on racial differences of temperament.

The first efforts of the new art were striking, for they were novel. The great public liked the maidens surrounded by the swirl of water or by their own abnormally abundant hair; they liked the long stems that curled about in lithe construction, and the plastic masses that bent to any shape. They liked, too, the furniture of indescribable lines which yet seemed honest and practical. And so it quickly came that commercialism fell upon the new idea, became intoxicated with success, and developed it hotly into the hideous exaggerations that we recognise in any style as signs of decadence.

This was the crucial time. L'Art Nouveau was

running its course feverishly as a novelty, and developing traits of monstrosity. If the artists and craftsmen had shown discouragement and had thrown the whole scheme over in disgust at its removal from their hands into that of distorters, the style would have perished in a day.

But the day was saved. The true artists worked with ever more determination to produce something worthy, after seeing their earlier work distorted at once into license and decadence. The way the day was saved was by introducing into the work the same trained craftsmanship that prevailed in the execution of work during the time of "the three Louis."

This perfection of labour is perhaps more noticeable in France, where artists generally hold to the opinion that if the style is executed with the same lavish expenditure of labour and talent as that prevailing when the sun of the Gobelins factory was in its zenith, the new productions will have as much reason for longevity.

We can no longer regard lightly L'Art Nouveau.

As it has its national peculiarities these are interesting to note. To France one turns first, from force of habit. To understand the French expression of the new forms we must remember two things clearly, — the first is the return to nature for ideas, the next is the French custom of copying their own time-honoured models.

As soon as France waked from her blood-gorged Revolution, she realised the mistaken vandalism of destroying and banishing all that had gone before in decoration. Therefore all France was ransacked for the dispersed fugitives, and from all hiding-places were brought forth, piece by piece, the tables, chairs, desks, etc., that had been wrested from Versailles and other palaces, and these were put under government care in the Louvre, the Arsenal, and other museums. From that time forth young artists copied them. They formed the only source of artistic inspiration to designer and craftsman. Every art student of France knows them in all their details as an alphabet of decoration.

Starting, then, with this equipment, it is only logical that L'Art Nouveau in the hands of French artists is deeply reminiscent of the styles of Louis XV and Louis XVI.

This it is that overwhelms the ruminating visitor in the new Musée des Arts Decoratifs in Paris. One entire room is there decorated and furnished in the new style in its latest and most perfected expression. Nature and old French styles unite to create the effect. What is this effect? Subtle in the extreme, but on the whole something which the lover of the old resents. It suggests the old, but is brightly new, with pale bright wood-work, pale clear frescoes, pale rugs. Amidst the mounting rose-vines of carved wood that frame the door, that spread and

grow to the height of the wall and creep beneath the ceiling, shines the classic construction of Louis XVI, and by means of this puissant background the designer gains strength. And this is the secret of the French work, its familiar construction beneath the licensed embellishment.

It is the same with the furniture in the room; the shapes are those we have known in the Pompadour's salons and Marie Antoinette's boudoirs, but these are merely the forms on which the fancies of Nature play, on which the detail of L'Art Nouveau is hung.

True to their intuition that no permanency can be accomplished without painstaking execution, the craftsmanship on the French furniture rivals the inspired productions of Roentgen and Riesener, if not of Caffieri and Gouthière. The marquetry is a marvel. All the processes of inlaying known in the past are added to the knowledge of the moment; all the various woods of a century and a half ago are augmented by those since discovered, so that the craftsman in marquetry is daunted by nothing. Even the brush can accomplish no more than he with his equipment of craft, of secrets, of materials. It is a question in the minds of some if he is not led to overstep his province, which, after all, is not pictorial painting.

French marquetry designs mean to the most of us the diaper pattern, and the floral sprays of Louis

XV and Louis XVI. But in these made now the drawing is entirely in the new style.

As with marquetry, so with mounts. Still following the conviction that the new art must be treated as seriously as the old, and receive as much sacrifice in both money and time, the French worker completes his inlaid furniture with mounts which might compare favourably with those of the old masters if they had but the atmosphere of association that conspires to add subtlety to the artist's productions.

The modelling is of the unconventional, sinuous kind found in nature, not exaggerated, but transplanted. The chiselling and engraving is as fine as the metal worker can make it, and effects which charm and thrill are produced by the use of various shades of gold in one piece. This same manner is used in large ornamental work for interiors with rich and pleasing effect.

It is not supposable that the wood of furniture is left uncarved; it is treated with the same thought, the unconventional detail thrown upon the old familiar shapes.

Do we like it? A question hard to answer. Those who approach it with an open mind free from resentment will be forced to admit that it has strong claims to respect. Those who in wandering about Paris pass from the gallery of the Louvre, where the furniture of the eighteenth century magnificently

Fig. 123. CABINET. *Designed by M. H. Baillie Scott*
COURTESY OF THE INTERNATIONAL STUDIO

Fig. 124. NOOK IN A BACHELOR'S LIVING ROOM. *Designed by E. H. Walther*
COURTESY OF THE INTERNATIONAL STUDIO

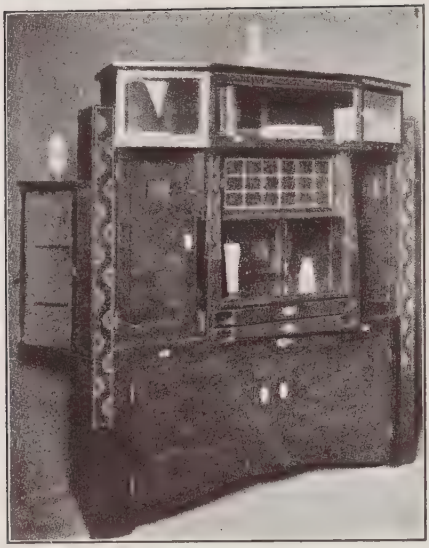


Fig. 125. CABINET FOR BOOKS
Designed by Professor Olbrich
COURTESY OF THE INTERNATIONAL STUDIO

Fig. 126. BEDROOM. *Designed by Nicolas*
COURTESY OF THE INTERNATIONAL STUDIO

holds court, to the new salon in the Musée des Arts Decoratifs, will shake a dubious head, and fill his home with the old. But even so have the conservative ever done with innovation.

If the French expression of the new movement is like a new dressing of an old friend, wherein do other countries differ in their expression, their interpretation of what might be called the Zeitgeist? Italy, so long accustomed to copying her own perfect past, has not yet developed her power; Austria and Germany lean towards designs that are characteristic, fantastic in the way we recognise as belonging to more northern peoples.

England, by starting on broad surfaces, has developed also in a way more stolid than that of France, by the lavish use of wood suggesting an eccentric attempt at nonchalance combined with naturalness, a return to planks and the sawmill as much as to nature.

The same might be urged as a description of the "Mission" styles in our own land. In England this style is called Quaint, and is only one expression of the new movement.

There is a marked contrast between this and a dainty evidence in which construction follows the lines of Sheraton. Seeing what the French were doing, English designers turned also to one of their own most pleasing styles, and are taking that as the stalk onto which the new art is grafted. L'Art

Nouveau in England, therefore, is briefly summed in these two styles, — the primitive shapes of early northern people and the dainty forms of Sheraton. This represents furniture only, and relates but to construction. The decorations are entirely in the new style, and are so lavish and obvious that they dominate the older element as exuberant youth dominates age.

What we are doing with L'Art Nouveau in America is characteristic. As in England, it has two expressions. The first is brutally crude, with a simplicity that is one of the best combinations of taste and utility. I refer to the Mission furniture, — the word relating, of course, to the old Spanish missions planted in California before that State was in the Union.

The second expression of the new thought is instinct with the nervous sensitiveness that is a national trait. To judge of it as a curiosity is one matter, to see it in a room where there is no other style is another. Having no traditions to copy, but with the prevailing idea of studying nature, perhaps our artists have followed her more closely than those of Europe. As a result, we have produced in our styles an easy nonchalance, an unlimited display of tortuous, sinuous curves and boldly sweeping lines, — lines given by the waves, the vines, the flowers.

But in doing this an essential element has been

lost, it is the all important one of strength. Under the spell of one of our decorative schemes carefully carried out, this is almost painfully apparent. In a room of this style one feels at first a strange wonder, a confused delight. All conventions are smoothly violated, all traditions are swept softly away. The eye wanders to the wavy lines of furniture, of the wood-work of the room, the wainscoting, the mantel, the door-frames, with a doubt as to the stability of it all. Not a familiar line is seen in the scheme. The wood does not stand staunchly to its duty, but bends and curves and swells like a plastic medium, and thereby loses all appearance of honest strength. Thus it seems that our artists are forgetting construction in the search for beauty. It can no more be neglected than bones can be left out of human construction.

This criticism of a room as an entirety does not, however, apply to small individual pieces of furniture which compare well with those made on the Continent. The conditions here are not as favourable for the production of such pieces as those in the Musée in Paris, and the patrons of art are not yet ready to encourage the production of such costly pieces in the new style.

In a thousand ways the American expression of the New Art suggests the art of Japan, and the reason is easily perceived. The Japanese have ever turned to nature for their lines of beauty. But

unlike us in our modern expression, they never apply these lines to construction. In that way they avoid a fault which is ours.

On the whole perhaps we look upon L'Art Nouveau as a very pretty little sister enveloped in swirling hair and floral veiling, whom we should lead by the hand tenderly, gayly, with the hope that later she will mature into a woman strong, beautiful, vital, and long-lived.

We are more than ready to assist her and to wait, for we have an ideal for this new century. It is to combine beauty of outline with honesty of construction, and to ally these with economy of production. It is to the attainment of this ideal that we look to L'Art Nouveau.

Public education in taste is not the least element in producing the desired result, but that is advancing rapidly among a quick thinking people. As its consequence, arts and crafts will be allied to manufacture, with the result that those who are left with bad taste will find no means of indulging it.

A TABLE OF DATES

ITALY — RENAISSANCE

1330	Armolfo.	1420–1500	Experiment and Innovation
1403	Classic Revival.	1500–1540	Perfection
1420	Brunelleschi.	1540–1580	Barocco

FRANCE

Styles	*Sovereigns*	
François Premier	Francis I.	1515
Henri Deux	Henri II.	1547
	Francis II.	1559
	Charles IX.	1560
	Henri III.	1574
	Henry IV.	1589
	Louis XIII.	1610
Louis Quatorze	Louis XIV.	1643
Louis Quinze	Louis XV.	1715
Louis Seize	Louis XVI.	1774–93
Empire	Napoleon	1799–1820
L'Art Nouveau	Present Time	

ENGLAND

Styles	*Sovereigns*	
Elizabethan or Tudor	Henry VIII.	1509
	Edward	1547
	Mary	1553
	Elizabeth	1603

ENGLAND — *Continued*

Styles	*Sovereigns*	
Jacobean or Stuart	James I.	1603
	Charles I.	1625
	Charles II.	1660
	James II.	1685
Queen Anne or Anglo-Dutch	William and Mary	1689
	Anne	1702
	George I.	1714
	George II.	1727
Chippendale, Hepplewhite, Sheraton, Adams	George III.	1760
Empire	George IV.	1820
L'Art Nouveau	Present Time	

AMERICA

Imported Styles	*Events*	
Jacobean	Charter of Virginia	1606
	Puritans at Plymouth	1620
	Charter Oak	1687
Queen Anne or Anglo-Dutch	Mississippi Bubble	1720
Chippendale, Hepplewhite	Bunker Hill	1775
Sheraton, Adam Brothers	Washington President	1787
English Empire	War with England	1812
L'Art Nouveau	Present Time	

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